INFORMATION PROVIDER'S GUIDE

AMERICA Online®

AMERICA ONLINE

Information Provider's Guide

Release 1.0
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Information Provider's Guide

America Online Information Provider Documentation

Bringing Information Online Using Rainman
Information Provider's Guide
Remote Managed Gateways

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The America Online Service

America Online is an interactive, online service that offers a rich variety of information and communication services in an engaging, easy-to-use format. America Online is divided into major areas, or departments, including News, Computing and Software, Entertainment, Shopping, and the People Connection™ online chat area.

Many of the most popular magazines and newspapers publish electronic editions on America Online. Both corporate and independent forums provide help, information, and files to users of all major desktop and palmtop computer systems and software. America Online members can check the prices of stocks and mutual funds at any time, and access databases of research files about companies. America Online's interactive auditoriums regularly feature sports, news, and entertainment celebrities, who answer questions directly from members. Members can meet and talk with other members from across the country who share almost any interest; through America Online's extensive gateways to the Internet, they can send mail, access information, and join in discussions with computer users around the world. In addition, members can save time and money with services that let them make airline reservations and order catalog merchandise 24 hours a day.

What is an Information Provider?

An information provider is any specific group, company, or organization that supplies data to an area or department on America Online.

There is no one type of information provider. Many companies, especially high-tech firms, provide support for their customers on America Online. Other companies provide news, educational information, or entertainment to

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America Online members. Still others are private professional organizations, or just groups of unaffiliated but like-minded individuals, who meet online to discuss their common interests and trade information.

Most information providers have at least some control over their own online areas, managing them with online tools that only they can access. The individuals who use the online tools to manage areas are generally known as sysops (short for "system operators"). When you enter into a partnership as an information provider with America Online, you work with an America Online staff member, known as a producer. The producer becomes your main contact for assistance in working on America Online. In addition, the America Online producer gives you access to the tools you need to use.

About This Manual

The *Information Provider's Guide* describes the online tools you need to use to maintain and manage your online areas. The manual contains specific information on the functions of the online tools, including step-by-step instructions with examples and illustrations.

This manual does not discuss Remote Managed Gateways, a way of creating a real-time connection from an America Online member to an information provider's computer system. For more information, see the America Online *Remote Managed Gateways* manual. This manual also does not discuss Rainman, a system that lets information providers create, update, and delete information stored on America Online. For more information, see the America Online manual *Bringing Information Online Using Rainman.*

Who Should Use This Manual

This manual is intended for America Online information providers and business partners. It is aimed in particular at sysops – those individuals who work online to create and maintain online areas.

This manual is not intended for the general membership. It contains confidential information whose use is governed by the agreements that you have signed with America Online. Please read the notice on the inside front page of this manual for more information.

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Chapter Overview

This manual contains the following chapters:

- Chapter 1, "Introduction," provides a high-level overview of the America Online service. This chapter also describes the contents and use of this manual.

- Chapter 2, "Online Rules, Conventions, and Etiquette," introduces the America Online community, how it communicates, and what rules of conduct America Online enforces as its Terms of Service. It also describes some of the unique vocabulary and symbols used in online communication.

- Chapter 3, "Working with Message Boards," describes how to maintain and manage a message board, an online area where members can post messages for other members to read.

- Chapter 4, "Working with Software Libraries," describes how to maintain and manage a software library, an online area where members can both copy files from and send files to America Online.

- Chapter 5, "Working with Clubs," describes how to manage clubs, or routing systems that let you send specific members to otherwise hidden areas online.

- Chapter 6, "Working with Auditoriums," describes how to run an auditorium, an online event where up to 500 members can see a guest speaker.

- Chapter 7, "Creating Sign-On Promotions (Affinity Groups Only)," describes how affinity group information providers can change the message and icon reserved on their own America Online Welcome Screen.

CHAPTER 2

Online Rules, Conventions, and Etiquette

America Online is a huge community with hundreds of thousands of members. Just like a physical community, it has its social codes and rules. The basic rules are described in the America Online Terms of Service (often abbreviated "TOS"), the agreement that all members of the America Online community accept when they join America Online or become America Online information providers. Most of this chapter discusses how you work with America Online producers and staff when faced with a violation of the Terms of Service.

America Online also takes part in the larger world of the electronic community, which has its own conventions regarding conduct, called "netiquette." In addition to netiquette, the electronic community has developed its own vocabulary of slang expressions and symbols uniquely suited to a community where people type instead of speaking. This chapter ends with a brief discussion of the basic online conventions, along with explanations of the most common terms in the online vocabulary.

America Online's Terms of Service

America Online's Terms of Service is the entire agreement between America Online and its members. It contains information about copyrights, licenses, fees, and other items related to membership and use of America Online's many services. By signing the America Online Information Provider Agreement, you or your organization agreed to observe America Online's Terms of Service. Since the Terms of Service are subject to changes and amendments, they are not included in this manual. All members can also read the Terms of Service online by going to keyword "TOS."

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Included in the Terms of Service are conditions regarding personal conduct and behavior. One of your major duties as an information provider is to make sure that all the information in your area satisfies the Terms of Service, including information added by members to software libraries and message boards or "spoken" in conference rooms and auditoriums.

The focus of this chapter is on conduct violations, or violations that would be personally offensive or hurtful to other members. Nonetheless, you should keep in mind that the Terms of Service are not limited to personal conduct. Uploading commercial software without permission is an example of a Terms of Service violation that is unrelated to personal conduct.

Common Conduct Violations

The following list defines and discusses the most common conduct violations that you may encounter in your areas. This list concentrates on violations that can occur in forums. Other violations, such as chain letters, that do not involve information provider areas are not discussed.

- Harassment — Making personal remarks about another member or group of members specifically to cause distress, embarrassment or other discomfort.

  We can only consider a member to be engaging in harassment if he or she has actually targeted a specific member or group with personal remarks. Disagreement with someone's point of view is perfectly acceptable – in fact, lively discussion is encouraged. Also, America Online will not warn a member or cancel the member's account for general antisocial behavior, such as posting a message saying "This message board is stupid."

- Room Disruption — Purposefully interfering with the normal flow of dialogue in a conference room or auditorium.

  Examples of room disruption are scrolling (entering random characters or carriage returns to make the dialogue move faster than members can read it), repeatedly interrupting conversations between members, or by acting in such a way as to antagonize, harass or create hostility in the room.

- Staff Impersonation — Pretending to be an America Online, Inc. staff member, guide, or a member of an information provider's staff.

- Sexually Explicit Graphics Files — Posting sexually explicit images to America Online software libraries.

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- Discussion and/or Commission of Illegal Activities — Committing, or discussing with the intent to commit, pirating of software, "phreaking" (illegal use of telephone and other communications equipment), promotion of illegal drugs, transmission of child pornography, or any other illegal activity.

- Commercial Solicitation — Using America Online for commercial purposes, such as posting a message to solicit any type of business. Online vendors are exempt from this policy, as are special "classified" boards or topics online.

  The intent of this rule is to keep members from encountering advertisements and sales pitches unless they choose to. If a member willingly enters an online area where a company sells products, that is the member's choice.

- Vulgarity/Profanity — Using vulgar or profane language in public areas such as public chat rooms or message boards.

  Our policy regarding what is vulgar or profane generally follows standards presently in use during prime-time television viewing hours, but is somewhat stricter. We do not allow most blatant sexual references or most non-clinical references to bodily functions. Contact your America Online producer for more information about specific situations.

Handling Violations of Terms of Service

America Online has a Terms of Service staff that monitors and responds to reports of Terms of Service violations. In addition, America Online has online guides, volunteer members who work both to stop violations of Terms of Service and to help members get the best use and enjoyment from America Online's many offerings. At any time, you can contact the Terms of Service staff by sending mail to screen name "TOS Staff" or by going to the Terms of Service area online at keyword "TOS."

As an information provider, you are the primary agent for controlling and maintaining your areas online. When you do discover violations, you should work with America Online staff to report the incident and to warn the violator about his or her actions. The sections below discuss how you maintain your areas, and explain the different procedures for reporting violations.

Controlling and Maintaining Your Area

By carefully inspecting the new content in your area online on a regular basis, you can usually find and remove information that violates the Terms of Service before members find it. The sections below discuss the different types of online areas and what to do about violations in them.

Violations in Message Boards

If a member posts a message or creates a topic that violates the Terms of Service, you must remove it from general viewing immediately, either by hiding it or deleting it. Hiding the message is usually preferable, since the message is still available for America Online staff to review.

For more information on hiding or deleting messages or topics, see Chapter 3, "Working with Message Boards."

After you have hidden or deleted the offending message or topic, you must e-mail the member to say that you have removed the message for Terms of Service violations. See "Contacting Members about Violations" on page 2-5. You must also report the incident to Terms of Service Staff. For a complete discussion of reporting violations, see "Reporting Violations" on page 2-6.

Violations in Software Libraries

When a member uploads a file to a software library, it is not available for public viewing until you release it. (For a discussion of releasing new uploads, see Chapter 4, "Working with Software Libraries.") If a file you receive in your library violates the Terms of Service, you must immediately delete the file.

After you have deleted the offending file, you must e-mail the member to tell him or her that you have removed the file for Terms of Service violations. You must also report the incident to Terms of Service Staff. For a complete discussion of reporting violations, see "Reporting Violations" on page 2-6.

The exception to this rule is pornographic uploads. You must move all pornographic uploads directly to your America Online producer's private library as soon as you receive them. If you do not know the number of your producer's private library, contact your America Online producer.

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Violations in Conference Rooms and Auditoriums

In conference rooms, if a member violates the Terms of Service, immediately send the member a warning message. At the same time, page a guide and report the problem so that the guide can assist you. See "Paging a Guide" on page 2-11 for more information.

In auditoriums, violations can occur in the questions members send to the stage, or in the member rows. If a member sends questions to the stage that violate the Terms of Service, you should send him or her an instant message indicating that the questions violate the Terms of Service.

Since you are unable to view the conversations in rows unless you make them visible to the whole audience, you cannot witness violations in a member row. If a member sends a message to the stage that another member is violating the Terms of Service, you can send an instant message warning the member that he or she is violating Terms of Service. If you do this, send a message to the member who complained, so he or she knows that you acted on the complaint. You may instead want to page a guide to help you with further problems, since you are busy managing the auditorium event.

You cannot remove a member from the auditorium. If the member continues to violate the Terms of Service, however, you can gag the member, or make the member's comments invisible to the rest of the row. For more information on gagging a member, see "Audience Controls" in Chapter 6, "Working with Auditoriums."

Contacting Members about Violations

In all communications with members about Terms of Service violations, remember to keep a neutral, civil, and professional tone. Many first-time Terms of Services violations, particularly non-conduct related ones, are simple mistakes or ignorance. Also, communications through e-mail or messages always seem more forceful than spoken communications, since the member cannot hear inflections or see body language. Make sure that you are always polite and professional.

If you feel that the member is unaware of the nature of the violation, explain it politely. For example, a member may upload a screen shot of a popular computer game to use as wallpaper (a background image for the computer desktop), not realizing that the images in the game are copyrighted. A short explanation is more useful to the member than a message that the file was removed.

Even with obviously offensive or repeat violators, restrict yourself to informing members that they have violated Terms of Service and that you have removed their inappropriate material from the service. Do not threaten the member with action or speak confrontationally. If there is a problem, contact your producer or an America Online staff member. America Online Terms of Service staff will deal with the member directly regarding account cancellations or other actions.

Preventing Violations

When you monitor your area, you may come across situations that are beginning to go out of control. For example, you may see a discussion in the message board where one or more participants are moving from substantive subjects to personal attacks or insults ("flaming"). Before the discussion gets to the point that someone violates the Terms of Service out of anger, you can try to bring the discussion back to a more reasoned level.

You must be extremely professional and courteous when trying to control a situation online. Avoid taking sides; make it clear that you are only trying to bring the discussion back to a neutral level. In a conference room, you can remind everyone to stick to facts and relevant opinions, and to be polite. In message boards, you can send private e-mail messages to the individuals involved. You can also leave a message in the topic yourself, asking everyone to cool down, or just discussing the original subject calmly and fairly, summarizing the alternative views.

Do not remove messages or stop discussions that do not violate the Terms of Service, regardless of their content. America Online does not want to limit free and open discussions. Even if a member is expressing disagreeable opinions, or is simply being obnoxious, it is vital to the health of the America Online community that members be allowed to express themselves without the fear of official or corporate censure.

If you have any questions or need assistance, contact your America Online producer or America Online Terms of Service staff.

Reporting Violations

You should report violations that you find to America Online Terms of Service staff. Include what the violation was, where and when it occurred, the screen name of the member who committed it, and what action you have already taken. All members can report violations, and you are welcome to

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report violations you witness in other online areas that you do not control. If you have questions, you can contact Terms of Service staff at any time by sending mail to screen name "TOS Staff."

As a rule, you should report all violations in your area, even if they appear to you to be minor or accidental. A violator could be committing "accidental" violations in several different areas of the service. The Terms of Service Staff is accustomed to evaluating reports.

As noted in previous sections, contact your America Online producer for special cases involving illegal activities. Your producer will work with you and the Terms of Service staff to resolve the issue.

To report a violation, perform the following steps while online:

1. Press ⌘-K (Macintosh®) or CTRL-K (PC or Windows).

   - or -

   Select Keyword from the Go To menu.

   The Go to Keyword Screen appears:

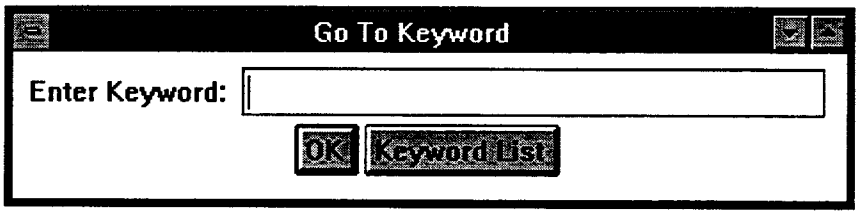

Figure 2.1 – Go to Keyword Screen

2. Type

   tos

3. Press RETURN.

   The Free Area Curtain appears:

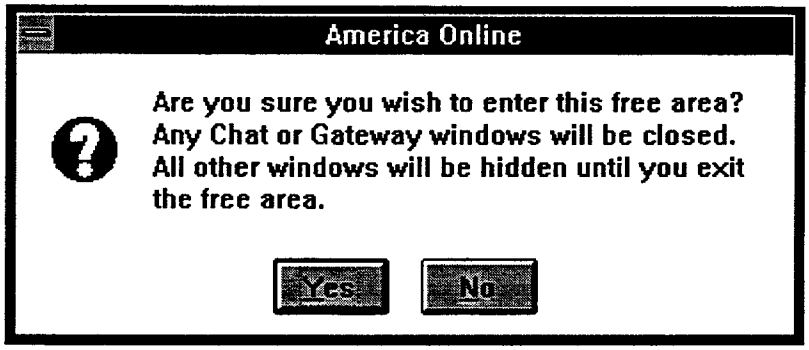
America Online
Are you sure you wish to enter this free area?
Any Chat or Gateway windows will be closed.
All other windows will be hidden until you exit
the free area.
Yes
No

Figure 2.2 – Free Area Curtain

The Terms of Service Staff Area is provided to members at no cost. In order to suspend charges, America Online must hide all normal paying areas while a member is in a free area.

Yes

4. Click on Yes to enter the free area.

The Terms of Service Main Screen appears:

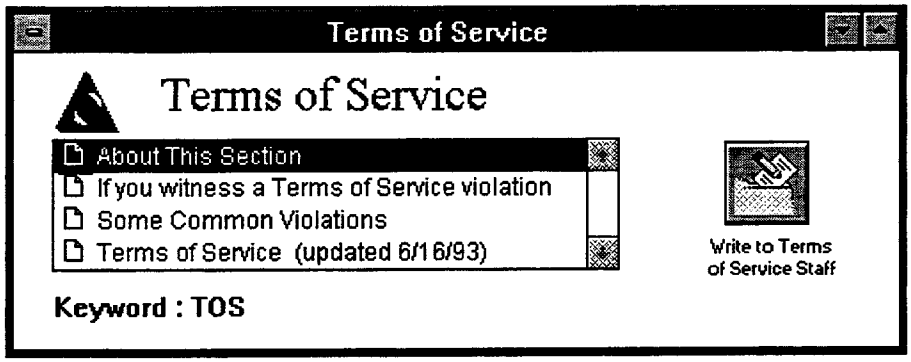
Terms of Service
Terms of Service
About This Section
If you witness a Terms of Service violation
Some Common Violations
Terms of Service (updated 6/16/93)
Write to Terms of Service Staff
Keyword : TOS

Figure 2.3 – Terms of Service Main Screen

Write to Terms of Service Staff

5. Click on Write to Terms of Service Staff.

The Write to Terms of Service Staff Screen appears:

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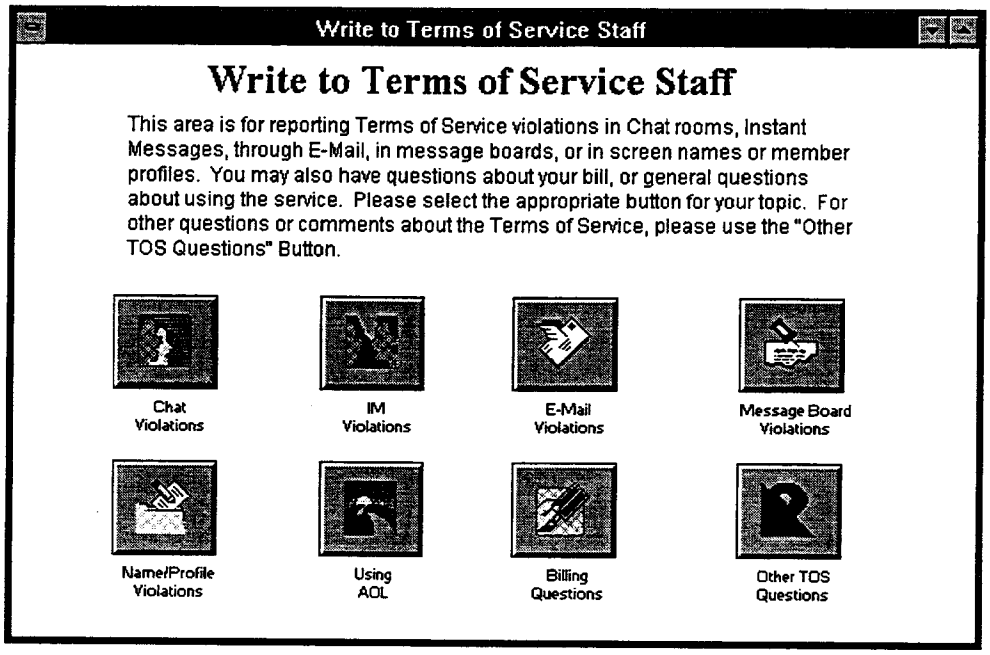
Write to Terms of Service Staff
Write to Terms of Service Staff
This area is for reporting Terms of Service violations in Chat rooms, Instant Messages, through E-Mail, in message boards, or in screen names or member profiles. You may also have questions about your bill, or general questions about using the service. Please select the appropriate button for your topic. For other questions or comments about the Terms of Service, please use the "Other TOS Questions" Button.
Chat Violations
IM Violations
E-Mail Violations
Message Board Violations
Name/Profile Violations
Using AOL
Billing Questions
Other TOS Questions

Figure 2.4 – Write to Terms of Service Staff Screen

6. Click on the button that corresponds to the violation you want to report:

Chat Violations	Violations that you witnessed in a conference room or in the People Connection chat area.
IM Violations	Violations in an Instant Message that a member sent you, or copied to you from a message that the member received.
E-Mail Violations	Violations in an e-mail message that a member sent or forwarded you.
Name/Profile Violations	Violations in a member's screen name itself, or in the member's online profile.
Using AOL	Lets members send general questions about the service. As an information provider, you should send your questions directly to your America Online producer.

Billing Questions — Lets members send questions about their bills. As an information provider, this area is not applicable to you. Contact your America Online producer for all issues related to your America Online account.

Other TOS Questions — Violations not covered by the other categories. Examples are an upload of commercial software to a software library, or a suspected impersonation of an America Online staff member.

Also, you can use "Other TOS Questions" to ask a question about a Terms of Service issue.

The Report Screen for the violation you selected appears:

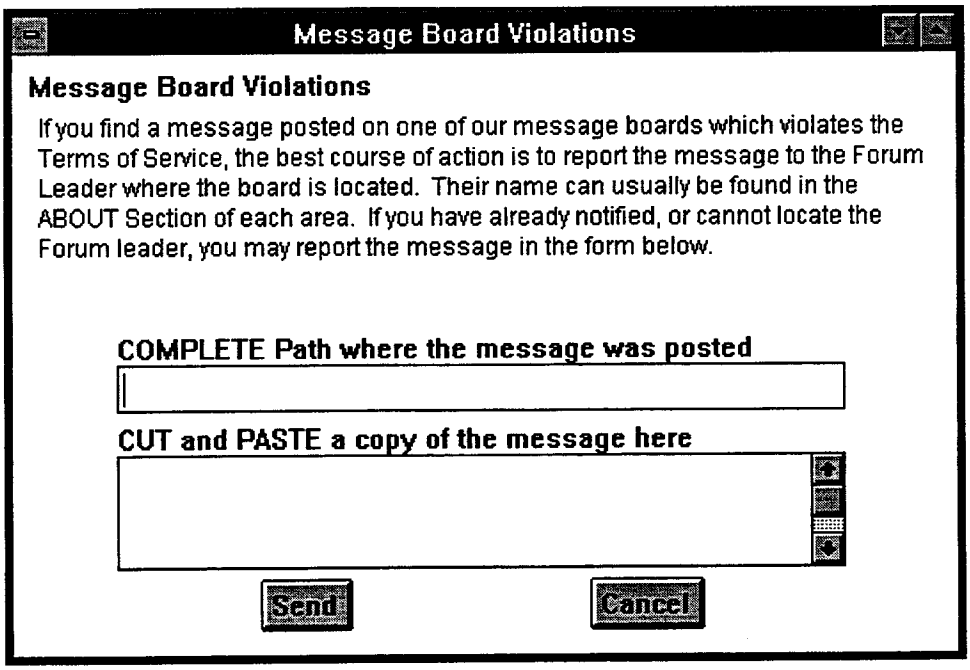
Message Board Violations
Message Board Violations
If you find a message posted on one of our message boards which violates the Terms of Service, the best course of action is to report the message to the Forum Leader where the board is located. Their name can usually be found in the ABOUT Section of each area. If you have already notified, or cannot locate the Forum leader, you may report the message in the form below.
COMPLETE Path where the message was posted
CUT and PASTE a copy of the message here
Send
Cancel

Figure 2.5 – Sample Report Screen (Message Board Violations)

7. Fill out all fields in the window. Each window has a different set of fields.

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Since you are an information provider, you may have already taken action against the violation or contacted the violator. In your report, make sure to describe what action you took.

Send

8. Click on Send to send your report to the Terms of Service Staff.

   On the Macintosh and PC Geos™ platforms, the Write to Terms of Service Staff Screen reappears. On Windows, a dialog box appears informing you that your message was sent. Click on OK to clear the box; the Write to Terms of Service Staff Screen then reappears.

9. Select "Exit Free Area" from the Go To menu.

   The Exit Free Area Curtain appears:

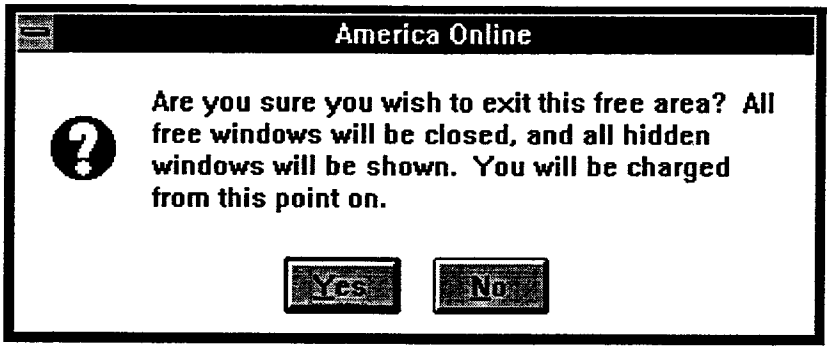
America Online
Are you sure you wish to exit this free area? All free windows will be closed, and all hidden windows will be shown. You will be charged from this point on.
Yes
No

Figure 2.6 – Exit Free Area Curtain

Yes

10. Click on Yes to exit the free area.

    Your normal America Online screen reappears, the way it looked before you entered the free area.

Paging a Guide

Guides are America Online members who volunteer to help members with problems and to take care of situations involving Terms of Service violations. Since you are an information provider and control your own area, you will mainly need guides to assist you in dealing with Terms of Service violations in conference rooms and auditoriums.

Of course, you can contact guides with questions about the service if your producer is not available. Guides are not staff members, however, and cannot help you with detailed technical questions. Contact your America Online producer for technical assistance.

To page a guide, perform the following steps:

1. Press ⌘-K (Macintosh) or CTRL-K (PC or Windows).

   - or -

   Select Keyword from the Go To menu.

   The Go to Keyword Screen appears:

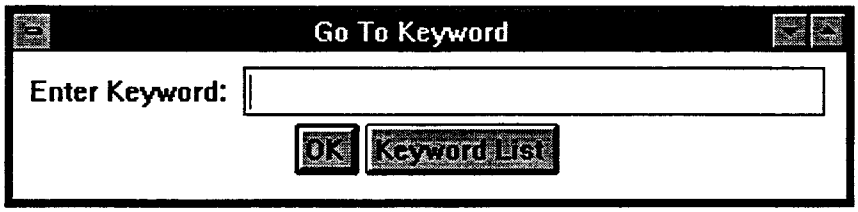

Figure 2.7 – Go to Keyword Screen

2. Type

   guidepager

3. Press RETURN.

   The Guide Pager Main Screen appears:

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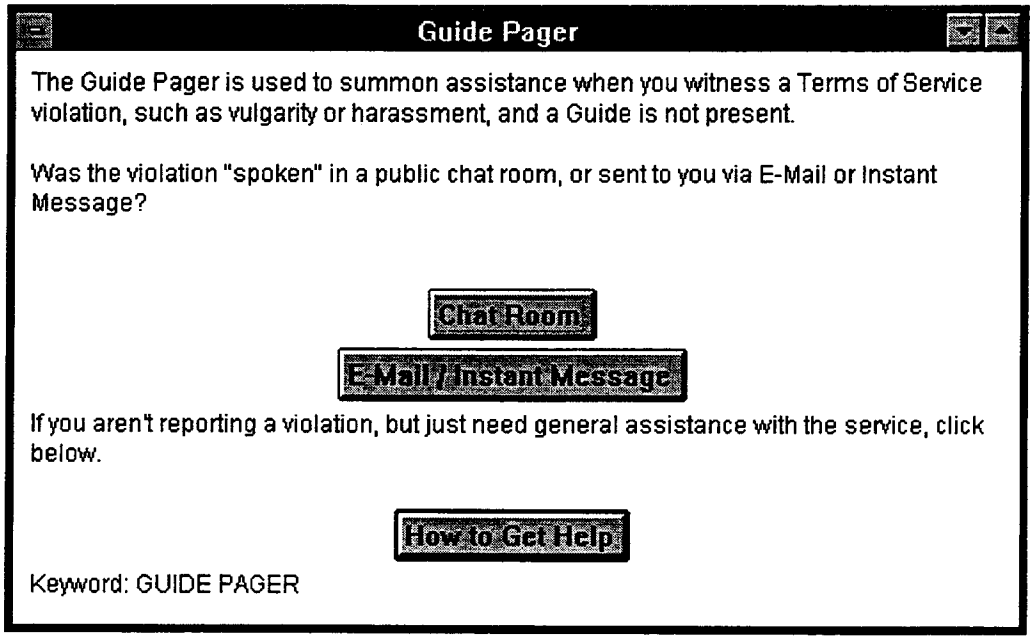
Guide Pager
The Guide Pager is used to summon assistance when you witness a Terms of Service violation, such as vulgarity or harassment, and a Guide is not present.
Was the violation "spoken" in a public chat room, or sent to you via E-Mail or Instant Message?
Chat Room
E-Mail / Instant Message
If you aren't reporting a violation, but just need general assistance with the service, click below.
How to Get Help
Keyword: GUIDE PAGER

Figure 2.8 – Guide Pager Main Screen

4. Click on the button that corresponds to the area where the violation is occurring:

Chat Room	Violations in a conference room, auditorium, or in the People Connection chat area.
E-Mail/Instant Message	Violations in an e-mail message or an instant message that a member sent or forwarded to you. Selecting this button takes you to the Write to Terms of Service Staff Screen. For complete information about the available functions, see "Reporting Violations" on page 2-6.
How to Get Help	Opens a short document explaining the different methods for getting help with the America Online service.

If you selected Chat Room, the Guide Report Screen appears:

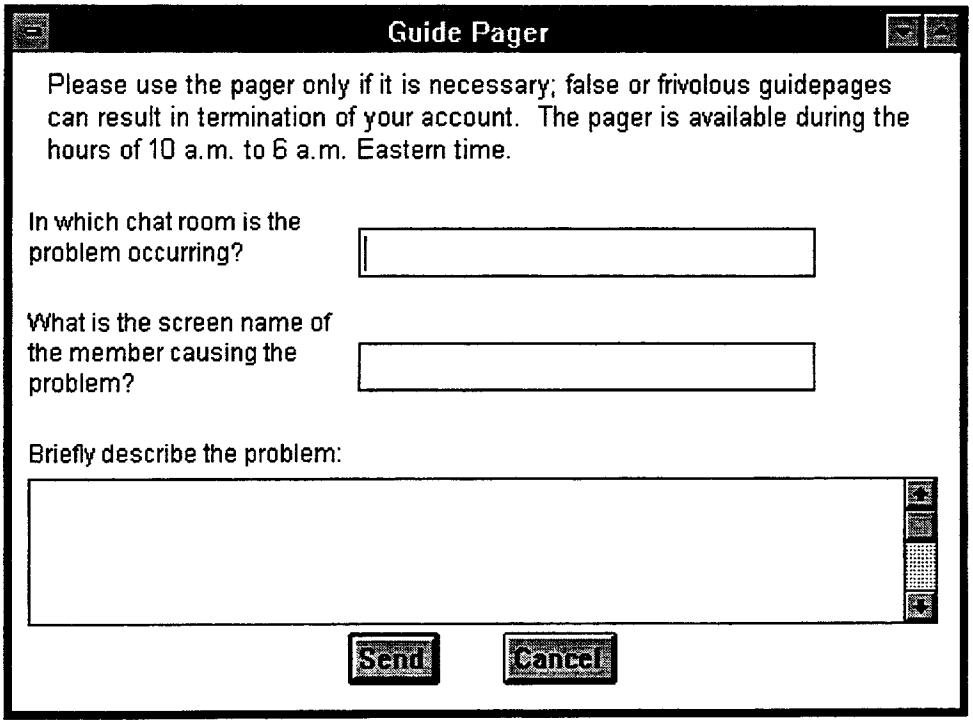
Guide Pager
Please use the pager only if it is necessary; false or frivolous guidepages can result in termination of your account. The pager is available during the hours of 10 a.m. to 6 a.m. Eastern time.
In which chat room is the problem occurring?
What is the screen name of the member causing the problem?
Briefly describe the problem:
Send
Cancel

Figure 2.9 – Guide Report Screen (Chat Room)

In what chat room... 5. Type the name of the chat room, conference room, or auditorium where you need assistance.

What is the screen name... 6. Type the screen name(s) of the member(s) who are violating the Terms of Service.

Briefly describe the problem: 7. Type a summary of the problem you encountered. Also, identify yourself as an information provider and name the area you work in. Since you are an information provider, you may have already taken action against the violation or contacted the violator. In your report, describe what action you have taken.

Send 8. Click on Send.

On the Macintosh and PC Geos platforms, the Main Screen reappears. On Windows, a dialog box appears informing you that your message was sent. Click on OK to clear the box; the Main Screen then reappears.

9. Click on the close box in the upper left corner of the Main Screen.

Your America Online desktop reappears.

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Online Etiquette – "Netiquette"

Every community has its codes of behavior, and the electronic community is no exception. America Online defines what is unacceptable with its Terms of Service, but what is acceptable is not the same as what is desirable.

To enjoy your time online, and to get a good response from other members of the community, you should have a basic understanding of netiquette. Most of it is common sense, or the same good manners you use in the real world. Some fundamental rules of netiquette are:

Be polite, or at least civil. Beyond the tenets of good manners, and the common-sense wisdom that civility works better than hostility, it is particularly important to watch your words. Online, no one can hear your voice. What you would have said hesitantly, or ironically, or with a shrug, appears online as words alone, usually with more force than you intend. Make sure that you always ask yourself if you would like to receive from a stranger what you are about to send.

Be brief. It costs money to read online. Also, reading online is more tiring than reading a book. Long-winded, clause-filled passages, elegant though they may be, get skipped.

Don't contribute unless you have something to say. Online users resent wading through messages that simply say "I agree with Bob" or that merely repeat what Bob or anyone else already said. The online community is smart and impatient; if you want to say something, say something new.

Make sure you are fully up-to-date on the discussion. Online users reserve particular venom for people who enter discussions and voice their opinions without reading what has already been posted.

Get quotes right. If you quote another person's message in order to argue with it, and your quote is not what the other person actually said, you appear lazy or dishonest. Paraphrasing a long passage is of course acceptable, but since copying and pasting text is relatively easy with a computer, you will be faulted in strident terms for incorrectly stating what someone else said.

Avoid capitalizing whole words. CAPITAL LETTERS SHOUT, and messages full of them are hard to read. To emphasize words, mark them off with asterisks (for example, *amazing*). For italics, such as a book title, mark the phrase off with underscores (for example, _Moby Dick_).

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Online Vocabulary

With millions of creative minds conversing online for more than a decade, it is no surprise that the electronic community has developed its own vocabulary and slang. One unusual feature of the electronic community, however, is that all communication is typed, often hurriedly. Much of the specific vocabulary thus grew from the need to express oneself in as few keystrokes as possible.

Common Terms

Since most of America Online's members are not computer professionals, the use of computer slang or jargon is limited. In specialized areas, such as programmer's conferences, the jargon becomes highly technical. In general interest areas there are only a few common terms that are easy to pick up in context. They include:

cyberspace The illusory place where people meet online. If you are online, you are "in" cyberspace.

the Net The Internet, a world-wide system that consists of thousands of academic, commercial, industrial and military computer sites. America Online is connected to the Internet. This term is also used more generally as a synonym for cyberspace.

uploading Copying data from your computer to an online area. For information about uploading files to America Online software libraries, see Chapter 4, "Working with Software Libraries."

downloading Copying data from an online area to your computer. For information about downloading files from America Online software libraries, see Chapter 4, "Working with Software Libraries."

e-mail Short for electronic mail, or a private transmission of text from one person to another. E-mail is extremely fast, going across the country in a matter of minutes.

snail mail The United States Postal Service.

flame A insult, personal attack, or vehement disagreement conducted in a public area. For example, a "flame war" is a passionate public debate in a message board, with the implication that the discussion has become less than substantive.

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workaround A temporary or inelegant solution to a computer problem. A similar term, common in programmer's discussions, is "kluge" (which rhymes with "huge").

Abbreviations

Many online terms you see are actually abbreviations of phrases. Among the most common are:

BTW "by the way"

IMO "in my opinion"

IMHO "in my humble opinion"

LOL "laughing out loud"

ROTF "rolling on the floor" (for when LOL is too weak)

ROFL "rolling on the floor laughing" (a variant of ROTF)

MOTSS "member of the same sex"

MOTOS "member of the opposite sex"

FAQ "frequently asked questions"

DK "don't know"

BRB "be right back" (for when the member is temporarily away from his or her computer)

AFK "away from the keyboard" (for when the member is temporarily away from his or her computer)

Smileys

Originally, to express emotions or inflections in text, online users added words inside angle brackets. For example, after making an ambiguous or a sarcastic statement, a user typed "<grin>." While this method is still used, it is much more common now to express emotions or inflections with "smileys" (also known as "emoticons").

Smileys are pictures created from punctuation marks. The original smiley is :) – look at it sideways and you see a smiling face.

There are now hundreds of smileys – and more than one published book explaining them – but only a handful are used by most people. The most common are:

`:)`	Smile (also, `:-)` or `:>`)
`:(`	Frown
`:D`	Laugh, or big smile
`;)`	Wink
`:\`	Confused or disconcerted
`=:0`	Screaming
`:P`	Sticking one's tongue out
`:~(`	Crying
`0:)`	An angel
`}:>`	A devil
`:X`	"My lips are sealed"
`-<-<-@`	A rose
`{name}`	A hug. The name of the person you are hugging goes between the brackets.

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CHAPTER 3

Working with Message Boards

What is a Message Board?

A message board is an online area where members write notes that other members can read and answer. Message boards are one of the most popular ways for members to communicate with each other, letting them ask questions and start discussions that any other member can see.

Although message boards are not live conversations, members can type long messages, and the message board conversation can continue for days, weeks, or even months. Because of this, over time a message board becomes not only a communication tool but an information resource. Members can read old conversations in message boards to learn things they did not know.

As an information provider, you have access to specialized tools to manage your board, letting you create and delete sections as you need to. You can also add messages of your own, either as normal messages or marked as "official" replies. If you have already answered a question in a message board once, you do not have to answer it again, since members can read what you already wrote.

The first part of this chapter describes all the message board functions that normal members can use. The second part, "Managing Message Boards with Board Tools" on page 3-27, discusses how you manage your board.

Figure 3.1 shows an example of a message board online:

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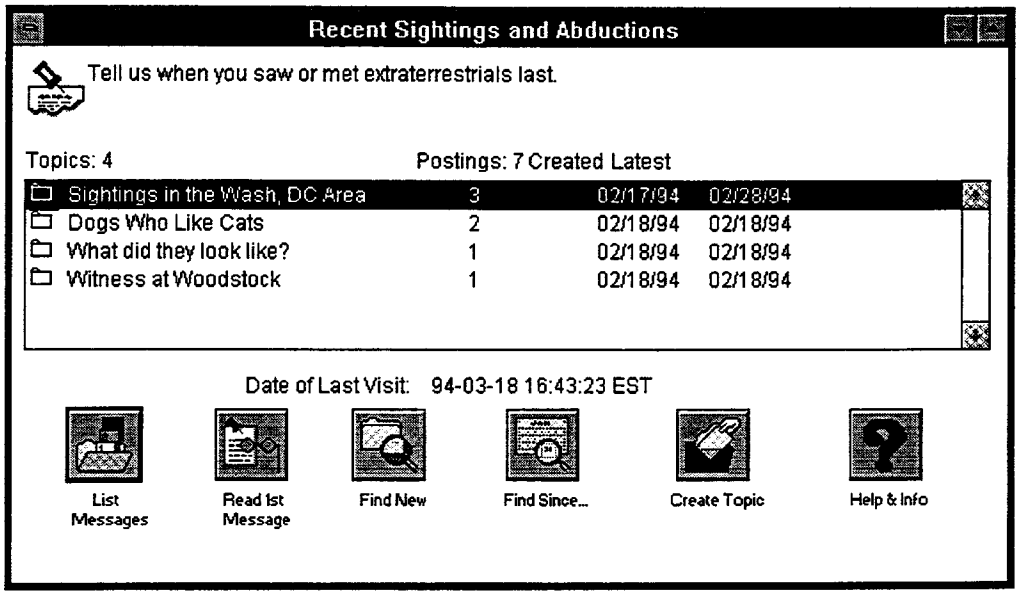
Recent Sightings and Abductions
Tell us when you saw or met extraterrestrials last.
Topics: 4
Postings: 7 Created Latest
Sightings in the Wash, DC Area 3 02/17/94 02/28/94
Dogs Who Like Cats 2 02/18/94 02/18/94
What did they look like? 1 02/18/94 02/18/94
Witness at Woodstock 1 02/18/94 02/18/94
Date of Last Visit: 94-03-18 16:43:23 EST
List Messages
Read 1st Message
Find New
Find Since...
Create Topic
Help & Info

Figure 3.1 – Message Board Main Screen (Windows™ platform)

Message boards are organized into topics (indicated by the folder icon, 🗀). Each topic contains text messages written online by members. Members cannot create message boards, but they can create topics within them.

Some message boards are set up to let members add additional text replies to individual messages. These responses are collectively called the message's "thread." Boards whose messages can contain threads are called "threaded" boards.

How Do I Get a Message Board?

Your America Online producer will create your message board. You work with your producer to determine how you want your message board to be configured, what screen names you want as the sysops for the board, and whether you need one or more message boards.

Since a board can contain up to 50 topics, most information providers only need one message board for their whole area. If your area does require multiple message boards, they will usually be connected to one main message board. The following sections explain how message boards are structured, and the different ways they can be configured.

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Message Board Structure

A message board can contain other message boards, or topics, but not both. Each board can contain up to 50 objects, whether they are other boards or topics.

A topic has a minimum storage capacity of 50 messages, and a maximum storage capacity of 500 messages. This means that the smallest topic can hold 50 messages, and the largest can hold no more than 500. Your America Online producer can change the storage capacity of topics in a particular board. Topic storage capacity is a board-wide setting, however. You cannot have two topics on the same board with different storage capacities.

On threaded boards, a message can contain as many replies as its topic can contain messages. For example, if the topic's storage capacity is 50 messages, the message's storage capacity is 50 responses. Threading is a board-wide setting; if any message on the board in any topic can contain a thread, all the messages in all topics can.

Figure 3.2 shows an abstract diagram of how message boards are structured:

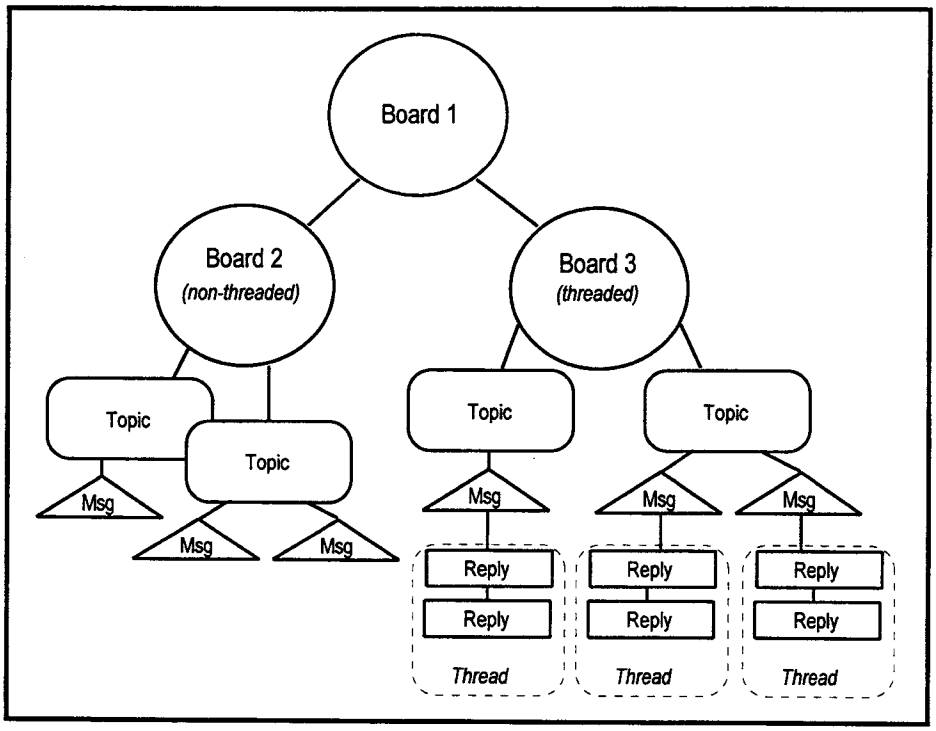

Figure 3.2 – Message Board Structure

Configuration Options

Message boards have five options that govern how the board functions. The options are:

- Scrolling — "Scrolling" is the America Online term for the automatic removal of topics and messages. You can set scrolling by date or by capacity. For example, you can configure the board so that messages older than a certain number of days are automatically removed, or so that a message is only removed when the topic reaches its maximum capacity, to make room for a new message. You can also turn off all scrolling, forcing you to maintain the board manually. Your America Online producer will work with you to determine the best scrolling options for your board.

- Creating Topics — On most America Online message boards, members can create their own topics. You can deactivate this ability, making sysops the only people who can create new topics in your message board. An example of an information provider who might want to turn off topic creation is a software company that wants its board to have only one topic for each of its products.

- Threading — Lets members reply to specific messages without creating separate messages of their own. Threading is best for boards where you expect a large number of messages. You can turn threading on after the board has been in operation for a while, in case the number of messages suddenly increases.

- Official Reply — When you activate threading, you can also activate the Official Reply feature. This marks replies from a sysop of the board with an asterisk, to indicate that the reply is an official or authoritative answer from the group that manages the board. The official reply feature is used mostly on product support bulletin boards, to distinguish the company's statement from the statements of other members.

- Maximum Messages per Topic — Each topic on the board can have a minimum storage capacity of 50 messages, and a maximum capacity of 500. In most cases, information providers want each topic to have the maximum capacity, since scrolling automatically keeps the board from getting too full (see "Scrolling," above). An example of a situation where a smaller capacity is desirable is a message board about current events, where you want to leave enough room for discussion, but you do not want lots of messages about old news crowding the board.

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Sysops

You and your producer can designate up to ten sysops for your message board. Sysop access is by screen name, not by account. Even if one screen name on an account is a sysop, the other screen names are not automatically given sysop access.

All sysops in a message board have the same abilities as normal members. Those functions are described in the section "Using Message Boards Online" on page 3-5. In addition, each sysop has access to **Board Tools**, a set of functions that let the sysop manage the board. These functions are described in the section "Managing Message Boards with Board Tools" on page 3-27.

Using Message Boards Online

When you access your message board, you see the board as it appears to members plus an additional button, Board Tools, with the America Online logo as the icon. Figure 3.2 shows a message board with the Board Tools button:

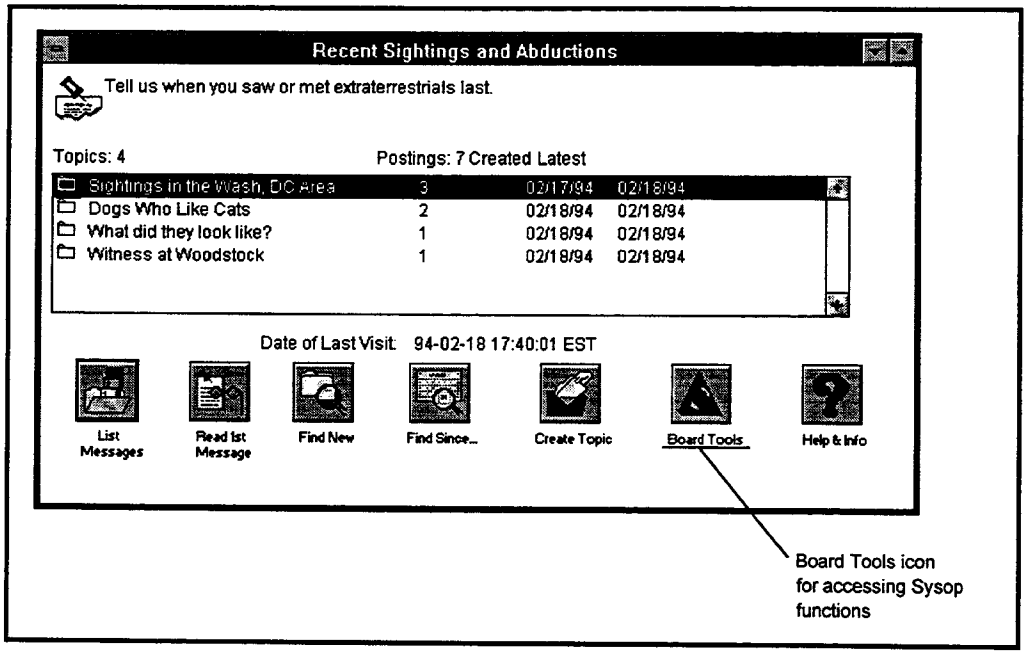
Recent Sightings and Abductions
Tell us when you saw or met extraterrestrials last.
Topics: 4
Postings: 7 Created Latest
Sightings in the Wash, DC Area 3 02/17/94 02/18/94
Dogs Who Like Cats 2 02/18/94 02/18/94
What did they look like? 1 02/18/94 02/18/94
Witness at Woodstock 1 02/18/94 02/18/94
Date of Last Visit: 94-02-18 17:40:01 EST
List Messages
Read 1st Message
Find New
Find Since...
Create Topic
Board Tools
Help & Info
Board Tools icon for accessing Sysop functions

Figure 3.3 – Message Board Main Screen with Board Tools Icon

The **Board Tools** are connected to a separate screen that you access by clicking the Board Tools button. For more information, see the section "Managing Message Boards with Board Tools" on page 3-27.

The normal member functions, which are also available to sysops, are described in the following sections. If you are completely new to America Online message boards, you may want to begin with the standard functions, such as reading a file description and downloading a file, before you try using the **Board Tools**.

Using the Scrollbars

When you enter the message board, the list of topics or the list of messages (depending on what level of the board you enter) appears inside the window. If there are more topics or messages in the board than can fit in the list, you can use the scrollbar on the right side of the list to move a new section of the list in the window. The scrollbar only operates when there are more entries than can fit in the list; otherwise, it is inactive. Figure 3.4 shows active and inactive scrollbars:

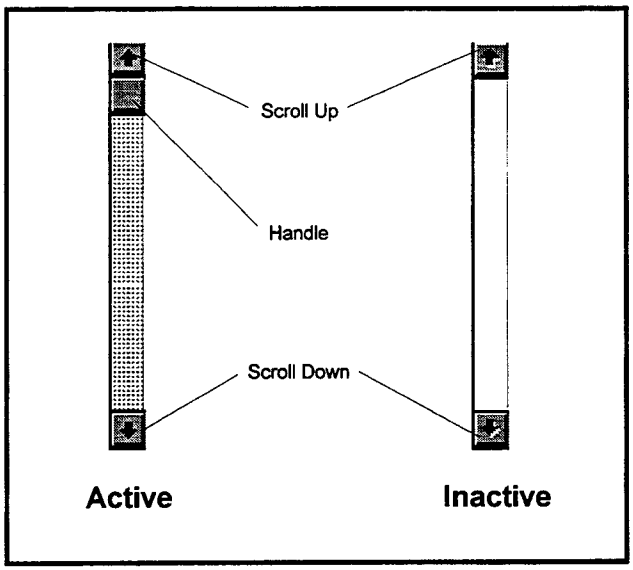

Figure 3.4 – Active and Inactive Scrollbars

You can click on the Scroll Down arrow to display a section of the list below the one currently displayed. To display a section of the list above the one currently displayed, you can click on the Scroll Up arrow.

You can also move the list by clicking on and holding the "handle," the square box inside the scrollbar, and moving it up and down with your mouse.

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Opening a Topic

A topic – also known as a folder – contains messages posted by members. Topics are identified on the Message Board Screen by the folder icon (🗀) preceding their titles.

Topics let members organize the ongoing discussions in the message board more narrowly than the subject of the board allows. A message board devoted to bicycling, for example, could have topics on different aspects of the subject, such as equipment, bike trails, and cross-training techniques. To read the messages in a topic, you have to open it.

To open a topic, perform the following steps from the Message Board Screen:

1. Highlight the topic you want to open by clicking on it once.

2. Click on List Messages

   - or -

   Double-click on the highlighted topic.

   The Show Topic Screen appears, listing the messages in the topic:

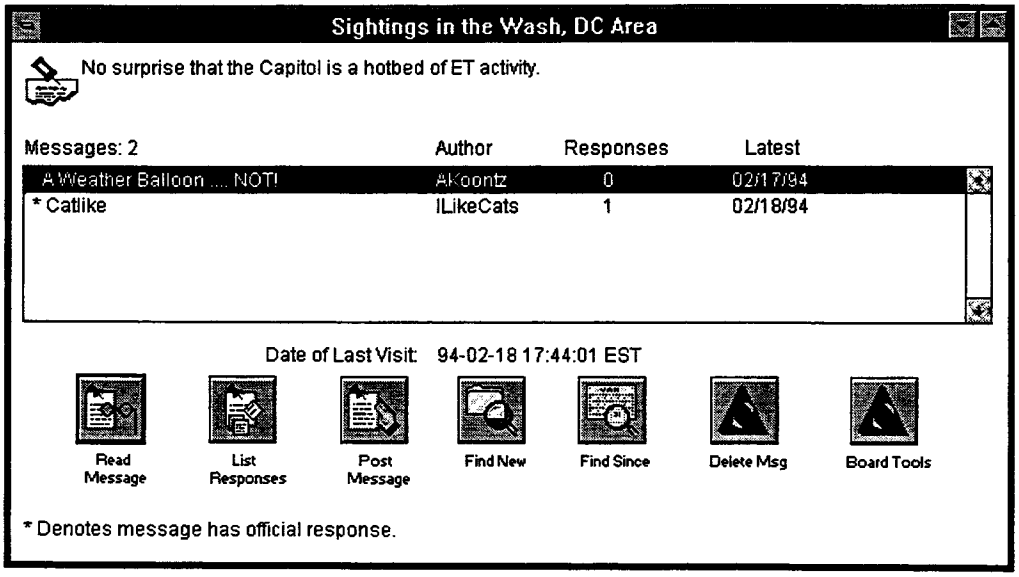

Figure 3.5 – Sample Show Topic Screen

2. Click on any of the buttons at the bottom of the Show Topic Screen to perform that function. These functions are described in the following sections.

   - or -

   Click on the close box in the upper left corner of the screen to exit the Show Topic Screen.

   The Message Board Screen reappears.

Displaying More Messages

When you open a topic, the messages in the topic are displayed in the list in the middle of the window. America Online only transmits 50 message titles at a time to the list. If the topic contains more than 50 messages, the More button on the Show Topic Screen appears, at the right of the bar of buttons at the bottom of the Show Topic Screen.

You can click on the More button to display the next 50 messages in the list. As the messages are transmitted, you see a wait cursor (hourglass in Windows and PC Geos, rotating disk in Macintosh), then new messages appear in the list.

Reading a Message

To read a message in a topic, perform the following steps from the Show Topic Screen:

1. Highlight the message you want to read by clicking on it once.

2. Click on Read Message

   - or -

   Double-click on the highlighted topic.

   The Read Message Screen appears:

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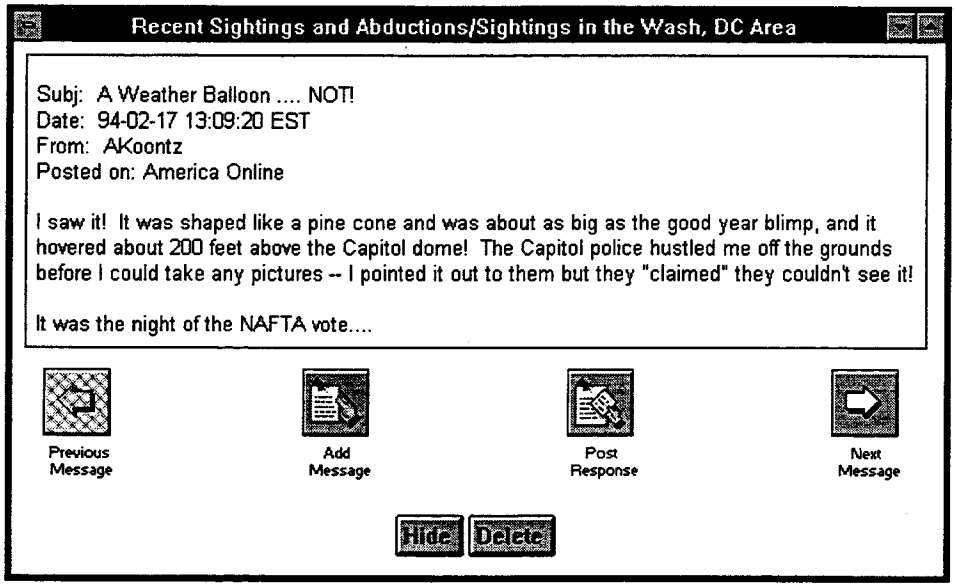
Recent Sightings and Abductions/Sightings in the Wash, DC Area
Subj: A Weather Balloon .... NOT!
Date: 94-02-17 13:09:20 EST
From: AKoontz
Posted on: America Online
I saw it! It was shaped like a pine cone and was about as big as the good year blimp, and it hovered about 200 feet above the Capitol dome! The Capitol police hustled me off the grounds before I could take any pictures -- I pointed it out to them but they "claimed" they couldn't see it!
It was the night of the NAFTA vote....
Previous Message
Add Message
Post Response
Next Message
Hide
Delete

Figure 3.6 – Sample Read Message Screen

If the message is longer than the window, a scrollbar appears on the right of the window.

2. Click on any of the buttons at the bottom of the screen to perform the function described:

Previous Message	Displays the message before this one in the list of messages on the Show Topic Screen. If this is the first message in the topic, the button is dimmed.
Add Message	Adds a new message to the topic. See "Posting a Message" on page 3-17 for complete instructions.
Post Response	Posts a reply to this message. This button only appears on the Read Message Screen if the board is threaded. See "Posting a Reply" on page 3-10 for complete instructions.
Next Message	Displays the message after this one in the list of messages on the Show Topic Screen. If this is the last message in the topic, the button is dimmed.

Hide	Hides this message. A hidden message cannot be seen by normal members. This button appears to sysops only.
Delete	Deletes this message. This button appears to sysops only. For instructions on deleting a message, see "Deleting a Message" on page 3-25.

3. Click on the close box in the upper left corner of the screen to exit the Read Message Screen.

   The Show Topic Screen reappears.

Posting a Reply

A reply is a different type of message that is attached to the message itself, not to the topic that contains it. Replies are only available on threaded message boards. Writing replies to a message lets you focus the discussion exclusively on the message itself. Also, if you reply to messages instead of sending new messages, other users can more easily peruse the contents of the topic, instead of reading through every answer message listed in the Show Topic Screen. You can also have a copy of your reply sent via America Online e-mail to the member who posted the original message.

You can post a reply from the Read Message Screen of the message you want to reply to, or from the List Replies Screen of the message you want to reply to. Both of these screens are accessed from the Show Topic Screen.

If the board is threaded, and if the Official Reply feature is turned on, a sysop can post an "official reply." For more information about the Official Reply feature, see "Configuration Options" on page 3-4. For instructions on posting an official reply, see "Posting an Official Reply" on page 3-12.

To post a reply, perform the following steps from the Read Message Screen, the List Replies Screen, or the Read Reply Screen:

1. Click on Post Response (Read Message Screen, Read Replies Screen) or Add Reply (List Replies Screen).

   The Post a Reply Screen appears:

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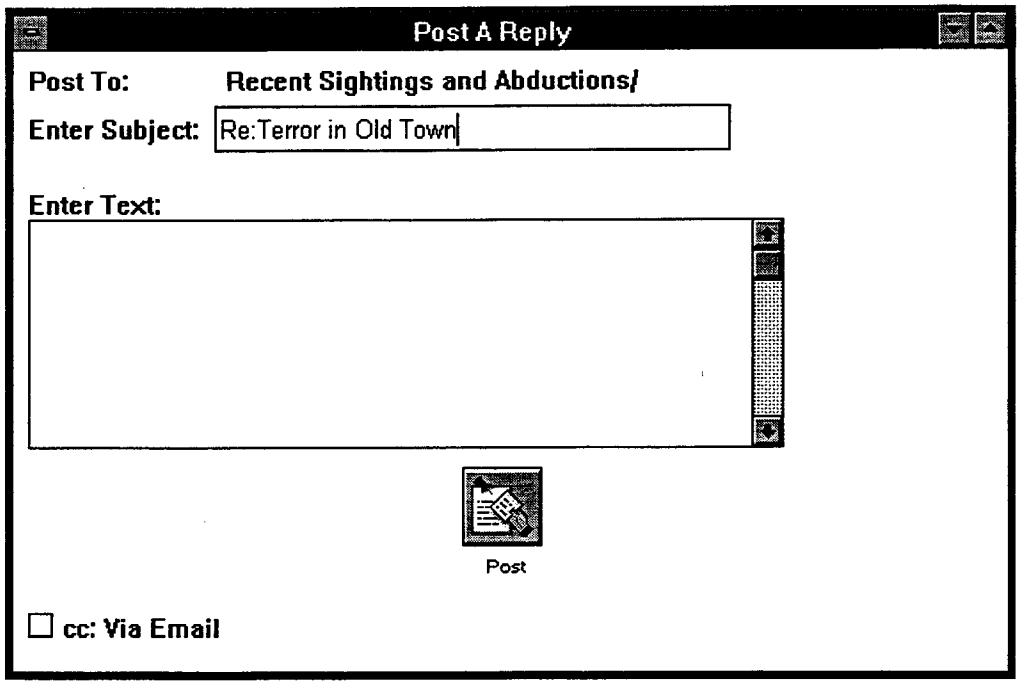

Figure 3.7 – Post a Reply Screen

Enter Subject 2. Type a 1-32 character subject for this reply. The message board automatically displays "Re:" followed by the subject of the message you are replying to. The subject appears in the list of messages in the List Replies Screen.

Enter Text 3. Type the contents of your reply.

cc: Via Email 4. Check this box if you want to have a copy of your reply sent to the member who posted the original message.

Post 5. Click on Post to post the reply.

A confirmation message appears:

Figure 3.8 – Post Reply Confirmation Message

OK

6. Click on OK.

   The Read Message or List Replies Screen appears.

Posting an Official Reply

An official reply appears in the board with an asterisk (*) next to it. You can post an official reply to a message if you want members to see an authoritative answer form you, as the sysop managing the board. Official replies are used mostly on product support bulletin boards, to distinguish the company's statement from the statements of other members. For example, if a member asks a question about getting a piece of software to work with a certain graphics card, you can identify your company's own supported solution to the problem by making it an official reply. This lets other members suggest alternate solutions, while still making it clear what the company's recommended solution is.

Only sysops can post official replies. The Official Reply feature is only available on threaded boards, and must be specifically turned on for your board. For more information on turning on the Official Reply feature, see "Configuration Options" on page 3-4.

To post an official reply, perform the following steps from the Read Message Screen or the List Replies Screen:

1. Click on Post Response (Read Message Screen) or Add Reply (List Replies Screen).

   The Post a Reply Screen appears:

 © America Online, Inc. 1994

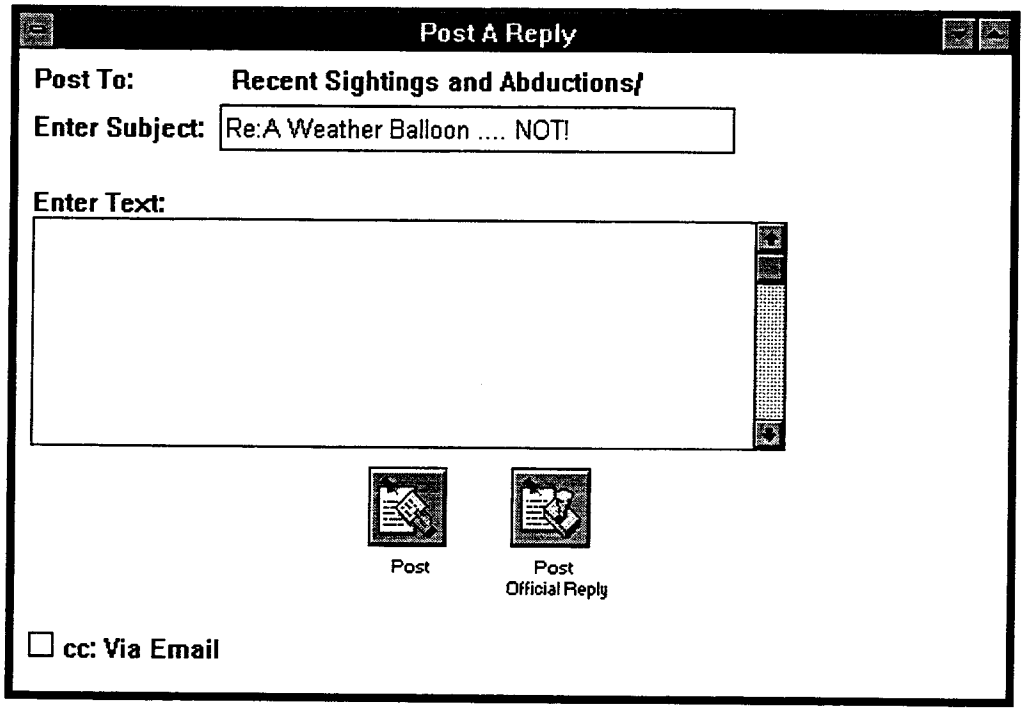

Figure 3.9 – Post a Reply Screen

Enter Subject 2. Type a 1-32 character subject for this reply. The message board automatically displays "Re:" followed by the subject of the message you are replying to. The subject appears in the list of messages in the List Replies Screen.

Enter Text 3. Type the contents of your reply.

cc: Via Email 4. Check this box if you want to have a copy of your reply sent to the member who posted the original message.

Post **Caution:** If you click on Post, your reply will appear as a standard reply, not an official reply.

Post Official Reply 5. Click on Post Official Reply to post the reply.

A confirmation message appears:

Figure 3.10 – Post Official Reply Confirmation Message

OK

6. Click on OK.

   The Read Message or List Replies Screen appears.

   Note: The List Replies screen is not automatically updated to show the new official reply. You must close it and re-open it to see your official reply, marked with an asterisk.

Reading Replies

You can list all of the replies made to any message on a threaded board and read a reply from that list. You can see if there are any replies to a message by reading the Responses column in the Show Topic Screen, as shown in Figure 3.11:

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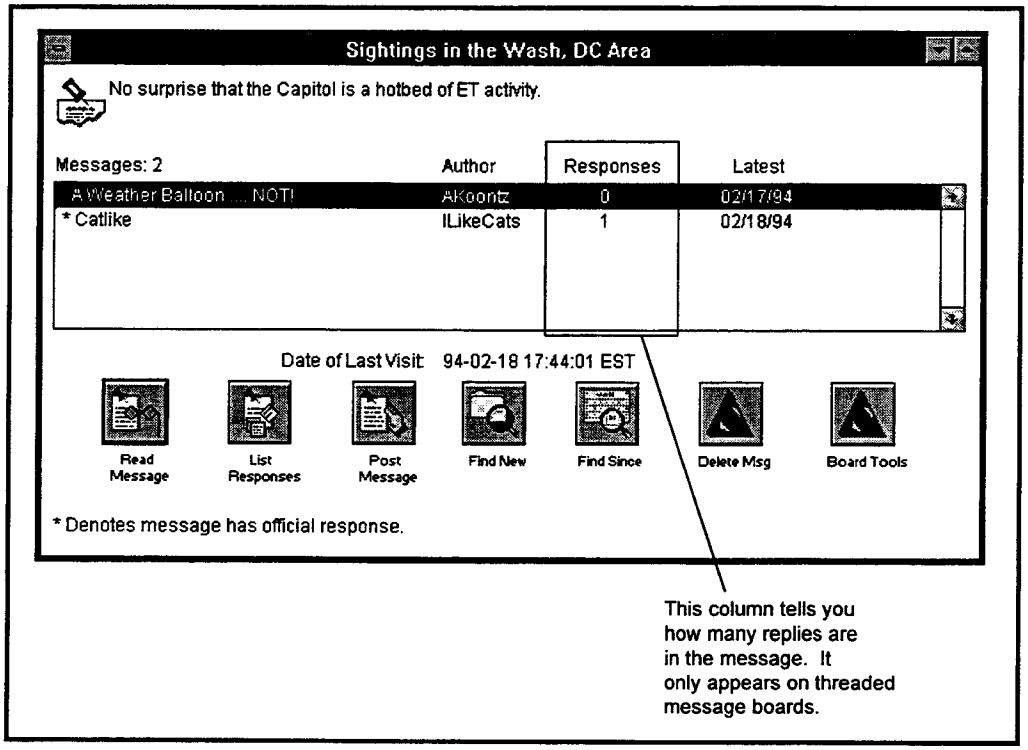

Figure 3.11 – Sample Show Topic Screen with Replies Column

To read a reply, perform the following steps from the Show Topic Screen:

1. Highlight the message for which you want to read replies by clicking on the message once.

2. Click on List Responses.

   The List Replies Screen appears:

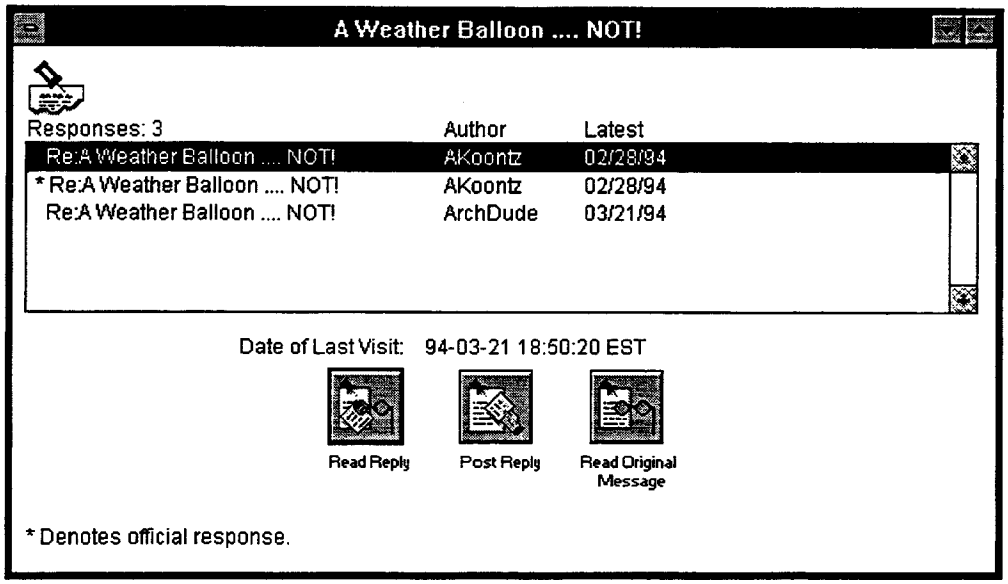

Figure 3.12 – List Replies Screen

If there are more replies than can fit in the window, a scrollbar appears on the right of the window. If there are more than 60 replies to the message, the More button appears in the row of buttons at the bottom of the screen.

3. Double-click on the reply you want to read.

   The Read Reply Screen appears:

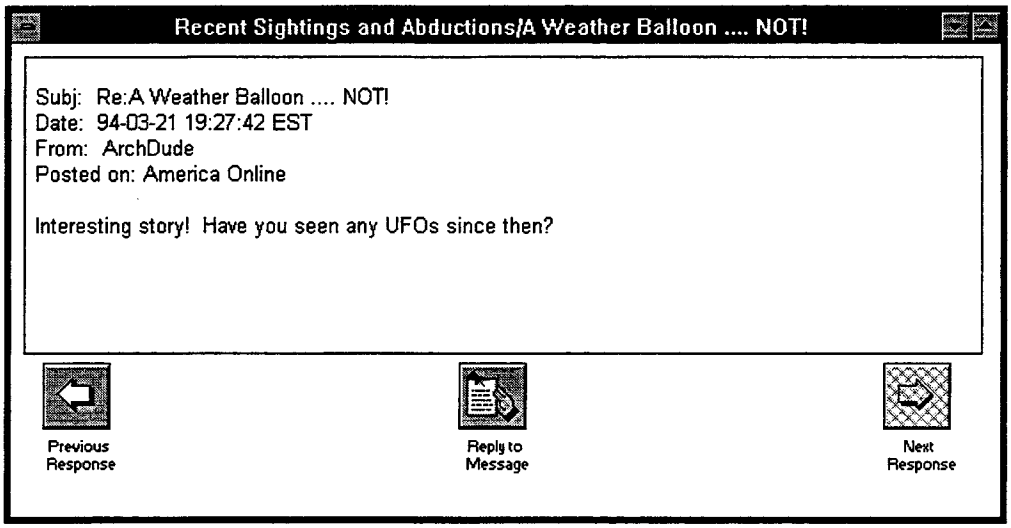
Recent Sightings and Abductions/A Weather Balloon .... NOT!
Subj: Re:A Weather Balloon .... NOT!
Date: 94-03-21 19:27:42 EST
From: ArchDude
Posted on: America Online
Interesting story! Have you seen any UFOs since then?
Previous Response
Reply to Message
Next Response

Figure 3.13 – Sample Read Reply Screen

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If the reply is longer than the window, a scrollbar appears on the right of the window.

4. Click on any of the buttons at the bottom of the screen to perform the function described:

Previous Response	Displays the response before this one in the list of replies on the List Replies Screen. If this is the last reply in the message, the button is dimmed.
Reply to Message	Adds a new reply to the message. See "Posting a Message" on page 3-10 for complete instructions.
Next Response	Displays the response after this one in the list of replies on the List Replies Screen. If this is the last reply in the message, the button is dimmed.

5. Click on the close box in the upper left corner of the screen to exit the Read Reply Screen.

   The List Replies Screen reappears.

6. Click on the close box in the upper left corner of the screen to exit the List Replies Screen.

   The Show Topic Screen reappears.

Posting a Message

Posting or adding a message lets you write a new message and include it in the topic. You can post a message to a topic from either the Show Topic Screen or the Read Message screen.

To post a message, perform the following steps from either the Show Topic Screen or the Read Message Screen:

1. Click on Post Message (Show Topic Screen) or Add Message (Read Message Screen).

The Add a Message Screen appears:

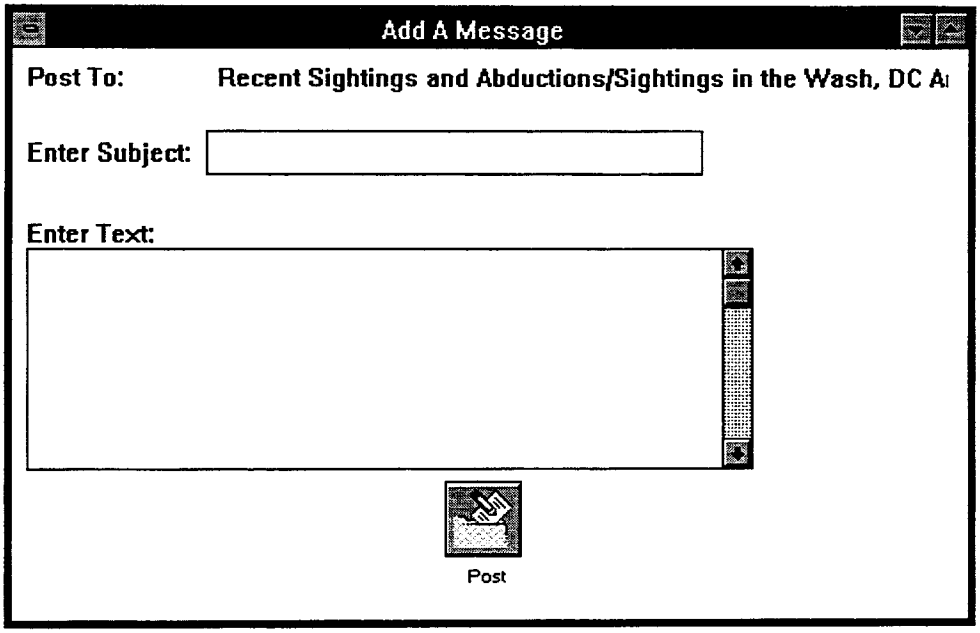

Figure 3.14 – Add a Message Screen

Enter Subject 2. Type a 1-32 character subject for this message. The subject appears in the list of messages in the Show Topic Screen.

Enter Text 3. Type the contents of your message.

Figure 3.15 shows a sample message in the Add a Message Screen:

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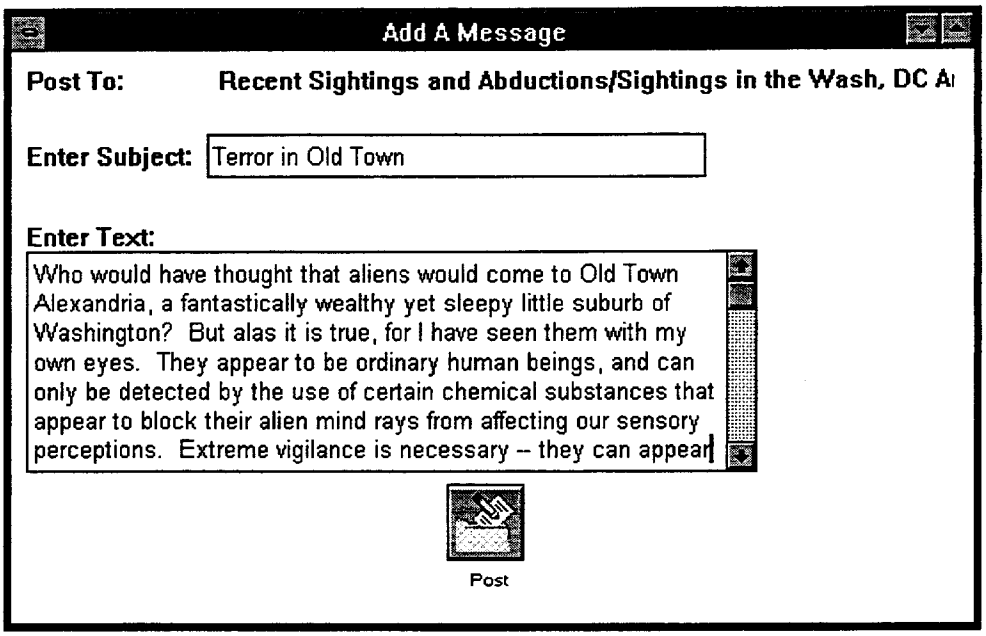
Add A Message
Post To: Recent Sightings and Abductions/Sightings in the Wash, DC A
Enter Subject: Terror in Old Town
Enter Text:
Who would have thought that aliens would come to Old Town Alexandria, a fantastically wealthy yet sleepy little suburb of Washington? But alas it is true, for I have seen them with my own eyes. They appear to be ordinary human beings, and can only be detected by the use of certain chemical substances that appear to block their alien mind rays from affecting our sensory perceptions. Extreme vigilance is necessary -- they can appear
Post

Figure 3.15 – Sample Completed Add a Message Screen

Post 4. Click on Post to add your message to the topic.

A confirmation message appears:

Figure 3.16 – Add a Message Confirmation Message

OK 5. Click on OK.

The Show Topic Screen or the Add a Message Screen reappears.

Creating a Topic

A topic (also known as a folder) is a collection of messages. Topics let members focus discussions in the message board on particular areas. All members can create topics from the Board Screen, unless you tell your America Online producer to disable this function for your message board.

You can also create topics from **Board Tools**, the program that lets sysops manage message boards. See "Managing Your Message Boards with Board Tools" on page 3-27.

To create a new topic, perform the following steps from the Message Board Main Screen:

1. Click on Create Topic.

   The Create Topic Screen appears:

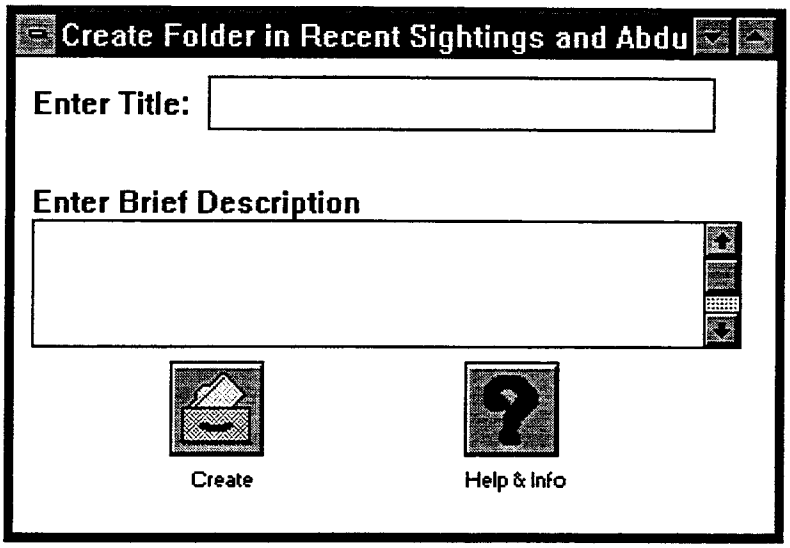

Figure 3.17 – Create Topic Screen

Create Folder in The window title reads "Create Folder in" followed by the name of the board where you are creating this topic.

Enter Title

2. Type the 1-32 character title you want for this topic.

Enter Brief Description

3. Type a 1-100 character description for this topic. The description appears at the top of the screen when members view this topic online.

   Caution: Do not paste text from an outside source into the Enter Brief Description field. You may inadvertently paste in a control character that the America Online software cannot display, causing an error when members try to access the topic. Always type descriptions directly into the field.

Create

4. Click on Create to create the new topic.

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A confirmation message appears:

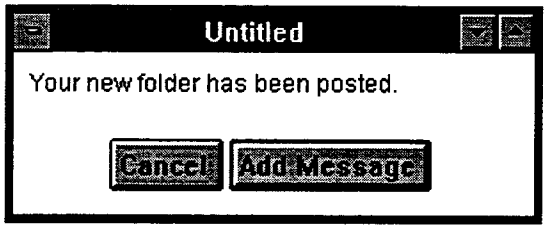

Figure 3.18 – Confirmation Message

Cancel

5. Click on Cancel to return to the Main Menu.

   The **Board Tools** Main Menu reappears.

   - or -

Add Message

Click on Add Message to immediately add a message to the new topic. See "Posting a Message" on page 3-17 for complete instructions on posting a message.

Finding New Messages

America Online keeps track of when each member enters a message board topic. This lets members display only messages added to the topic since the last time they opened it, instead of making them go through the entire list to find the new messages.

You can only find new messages from the Message Board Screen, before you enter the topic you want to display. If you open the topic, the system will record that the last time you opened the topic was now (that is, the current date and time). Therefore, you will not be able to perform a useful search for new messages.

To find the new messages in a topic, perform the following steps from the Message Board Screen:

1. Highlight the topic for which you want to display the new messages by clicking on it once.

   Caution: Do not double-click, since this will open the topic.

2. Click on Find New.

The Find New Results Screen appears:

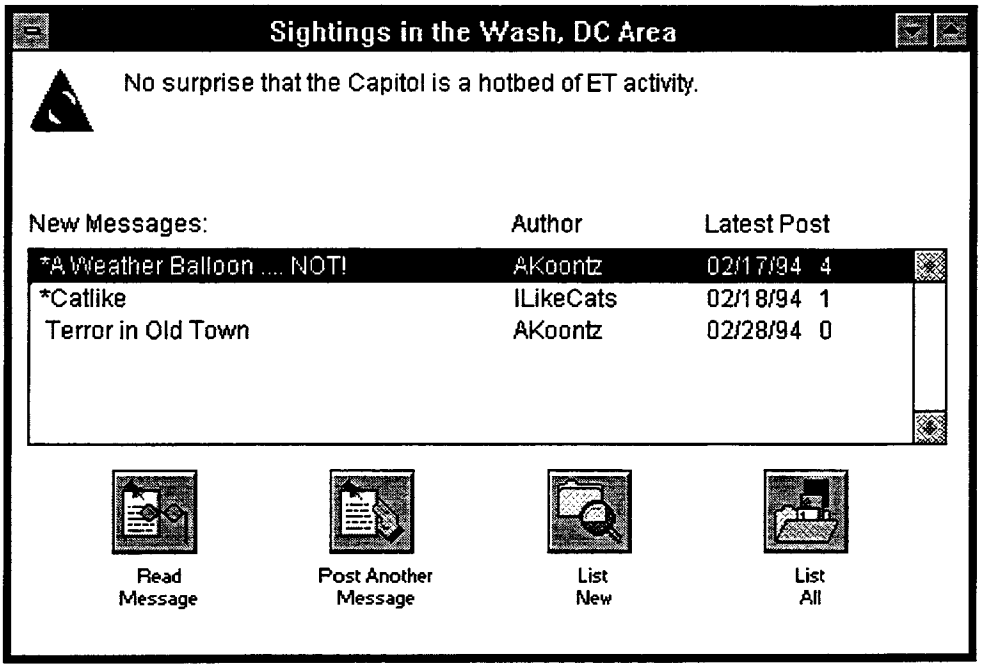

Figure 3.19 – Sample Find New Results

If the list is longer than the window, a scrollbar appears on the right of the window. If there are more than 60 new messages, the More button appears in the bar of buttons at the bottom of the screen.

2. Click on any of the buttons at the bottom of the screen to perform the function described:

Read Message	Lets you read the highlighted message. You may also double-click on the message you want to read.
Post Another Message	Opens the Post a Message Screen, letting you post a new message to this topic. See "Posting a Message" on page 3-17 for complete instructions on writing and posting a message to the topic.
List New	Opens the List Replies Screen, showing you all replies that are attached to this message. For more

information, see "Reading Replies" on page 3-14.

List All — Opens the Show Topic Screen, displaying the complete list of messages in the topic. For more information, see "Opening a Topic" on page 3-7.

- or -

Click on the close box in the upper left corner of the screen to exit the Find New Results Screen.

The Message Board Screen reappears.

Finding Recently Posted Messages

Members can search for messages posted to a topic from one to ninety-nine days before the current date. This lets members search for recent messages, for example, to find a message they know was posted in the last month, without reading through all the messages in the topic.

To find recently posted messages, perform the following steps from the Message Board Screen:

1. Highlight the topic for which you want to display the new messages by clicking on it once.

2. Click on Find Since.

   The Find Since Screen appears:

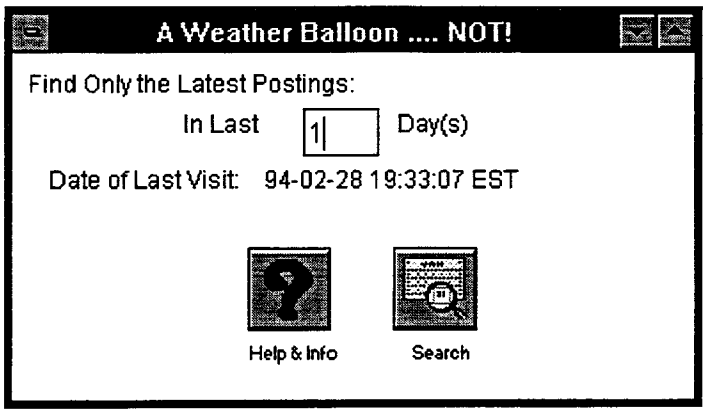

Figure 3.20 – Sample Find Since Screen

In Last ___ Day(s)

3. Type the number of days before the current date that you want to see.

   Your number must be between 1 and 99.

   - or -

Help & Info

Click on Help & Info to see the Message Boards help text.

Search

4. Click on Search to list the messages.

   The Find Since Results Screen appears:

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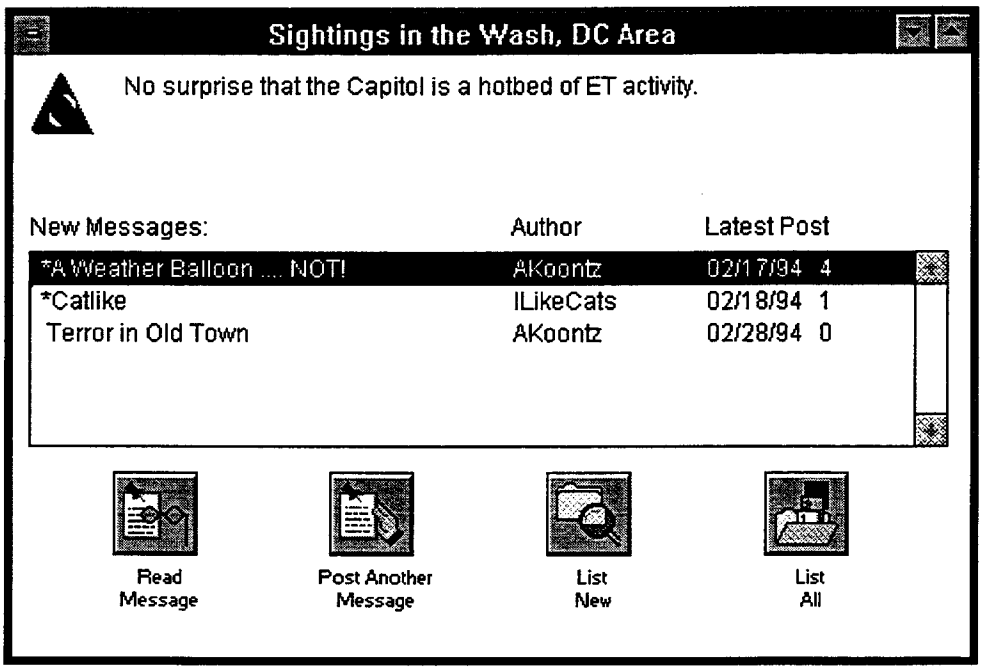

Figure 3.21 – Sample Find Since Results

Deleting a Message

The Delete Msg button, like the Board Tools button, appears only on the sysop's Show Topic Screen. Delete Msg lets you delete messages from the Show Topic Screen. Sysops can also delete messages from the Read Message Screen; see "Reading a Message" on page 3-8.

Figure 3.22 shows the Delete Msg button on the Show Topic Screen:

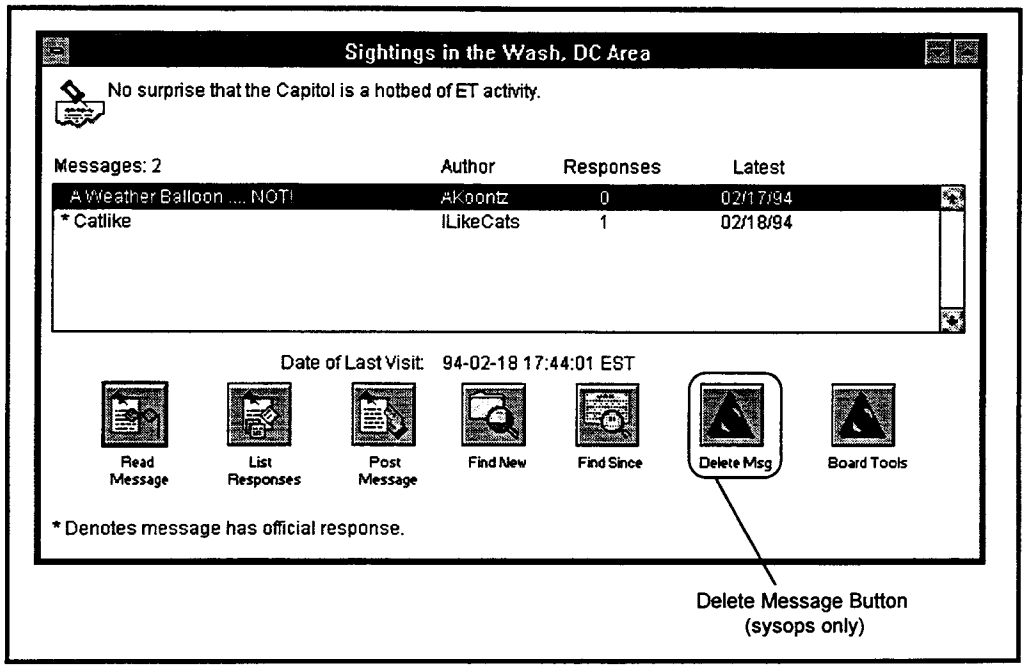

Figure 3.22 – Show Topic Screen with Delete Message Icon

To delete a message from the Show Topic Screen, perform the following steps:

1. Highlight the message you want to delete by clicking on it once.

Delete Msg

2. Click on Delete Msg.

   A Delete Query appears, asking you to confirm the deletion. Figure 3.22 shows the different kinds of delete queries:

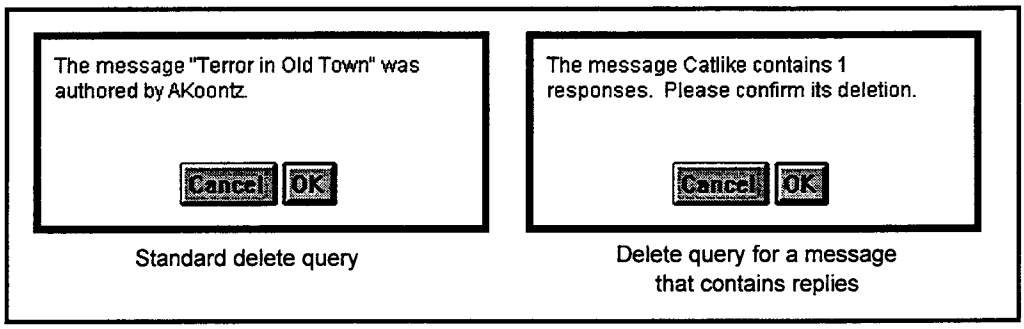
The message "Terror in Old Town" was authored by AKoontz.
Cancel
OK
Standard delete query
The message Catlike contains 1 responses. Please confirm its deletion.
Cancel
OK
Delete query for a message that contains replies

Figure 3.23 – Delete Queries

Cancel

3. Click on Cancel to stop deleting the message.

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The Show Topic Screen reappears.

- or -

OK Click on OK to delete the message.

A confirmation message appears:

Figure 3.24 – Delete Confirmation Message

OK 4. Click on OK to close the message.

The Show Topic Screen reappears. The screen is not automatically updated. You must close the screen and reopen it to see the results of your deletion.

If you delete a message in error, you may be able to recover it by changing its status back to "Released" using **Board Tools**. For more information, see "Changing the Status of a Board or Topic" on page 3-35.

Managing Message Boards with Board Tools

Board Tools are for sysops only. They let you create, edit, manage, and delete message boards by clicking on the Board Tools button that appears when you access your message board.

Clicking on this button brings up the **Board Tools** Main Menu. Depending on the type of message board you are in, you see the Main Menu for a board that contains other boards, a board that contains topics, or a topic. Figure 3.25 shows the Main Menu for a board that contains other boards:

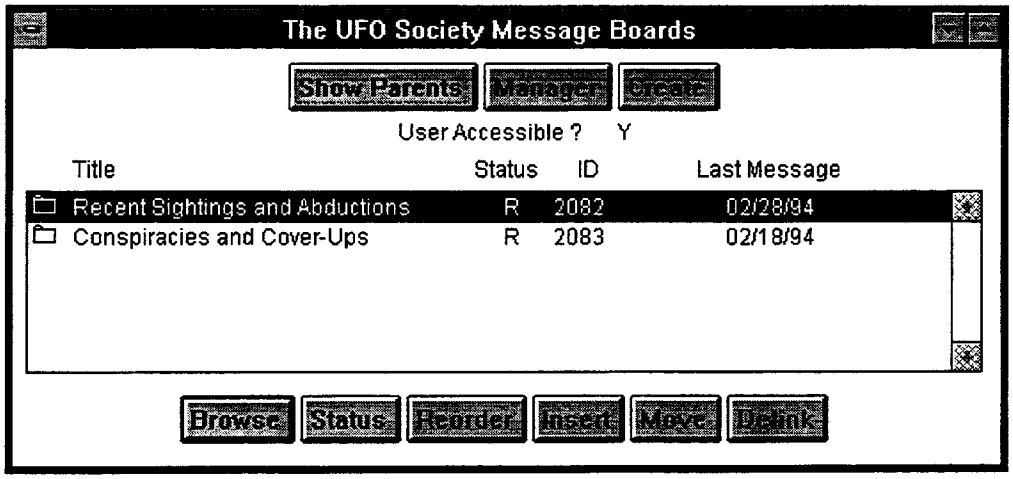

Figure 3.25 – **Board Tools** Main Menu (Board Contains Boards)

Figure 3.26 shows the Main Menu for a board that contains topics:

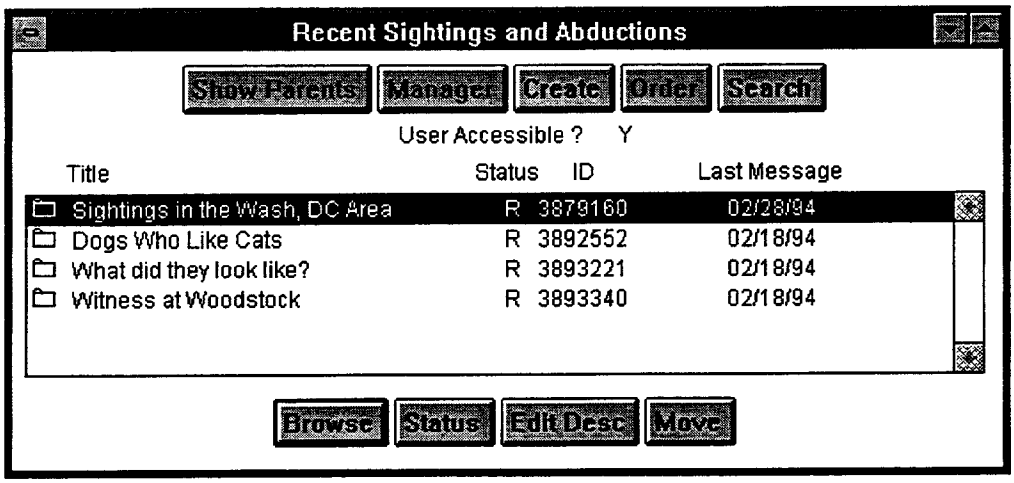

Figure 3.26 – **Board Tools** Main Menu (Board Contains Topics)

Figure 3.27 shows the Main Menu for a topic:

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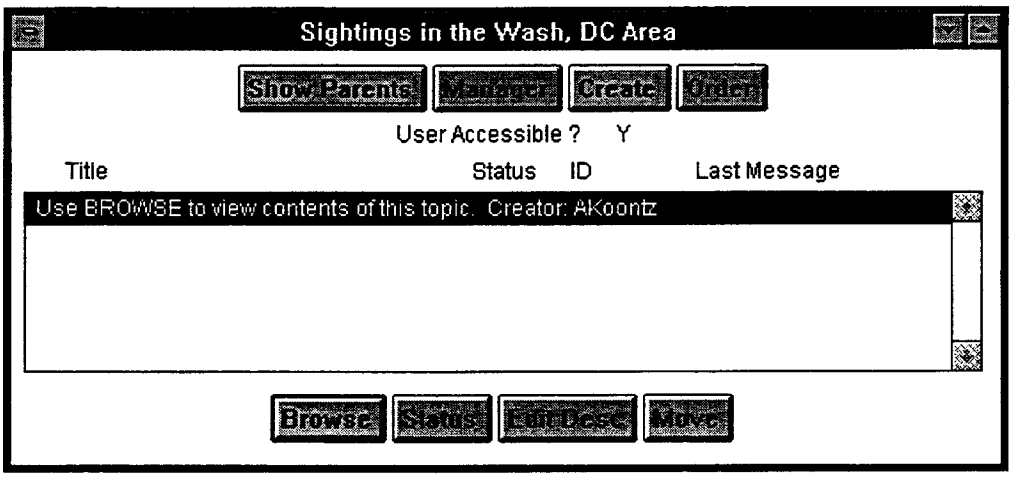

Figure 3.27 – **Board Tools** Main Menu (Topic)

Board Tools let you perform the following functions:

- Show Parents — Displays the board's "parents," or the boards that contain this board. See "Showing a Board's Parents" on page 3-30.
- Manager — Not supported.
- Create — Lets you create a new topic inside this board. This is the same function that is available to members from the standard Board Screen. For more information, see "Creating a New Topic" on page 3-19.
- Order — Not supported.
- Search — (Boards containing topics only) Lets you search this board for messages posted by a particular screen name or under a particular subject. See "Searching a Board" on page 3-31.
- User Accessible — Indicates if this board is available to members. To change a board's availability, see "Changing the Status of a Board or Topic" on page 3-35.
- Browse — Lets you view the contents of a board or topic contained in this board. See "Browsing a Board" on page 3-33, and "Browsing a Topic" on page 3-34. Browse is always the default action on the Board Tools Main Menu.
- Status — (Boards only) Lets you display or change the status of a board or topic contained in this board. See "Changing the Status of a Board or Topic" on page 3-35.

- Reorder — Not supported.
- Move — Lets you move a topic from this board to another. See "Moving a Topic" on page 3-40.
- Edit Desc — (Boards containing topics only) Lets you edit the description of a topic in the board. See "Editing a Topic's Title or Description" on page 3-42.

Showing a Board's Parents

A "parent" of a board is the board that contains it. Except for board 1, all boards must have at least one parent. Showing parents lets you see what board contains the board you are currently viewing. If a board has more than one parent, all the parents are displayed. You cannot change the parents of your board, however, only show them.

To show a board's parents, perform the following steps from the **Board Tools** Main Menu:

1. Click on Show Parents.

   The Show Parents Screen appears:

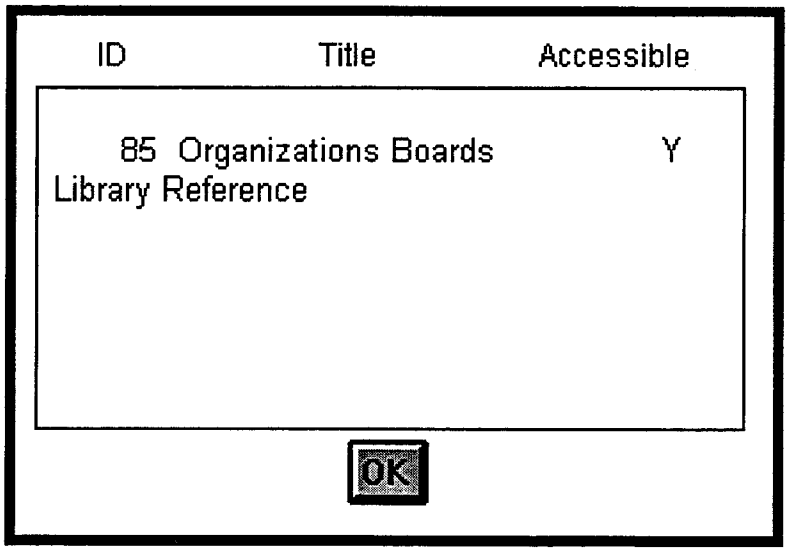

Figure 3.28 – Show Parents Screen

The Show Parents Screen lists the following information:

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ID	The ID number of the parent of the board or topic.
Title	The title of the parent message board.
Accessible	Indicates that the parent board is accessible to members (Y) or unavailable (N). You can make a board inaccessible if you are reorganizing it, among other reasons. See "Changing the Status of a Board or Topic," page 3-35.

OK 2. Click on OK to return to the **Board Tools** Main Menu.

Searching a Board

You can use the Search function to search a topic in a board for messages posted by a particular member or for a particular subject. For example, if you want to find all messages about the Middle East in a current events message board, you can search for the phrase "Middle East" in the subject line of any message. You can only search one topic at a time. You cannot search a board that contains other boards.

To search a board, perform the following steps from the **Board Tools** Main Menu:

1. Highlight the topic you want to examine.
2. Click on Search.

   The Search Screen appears:

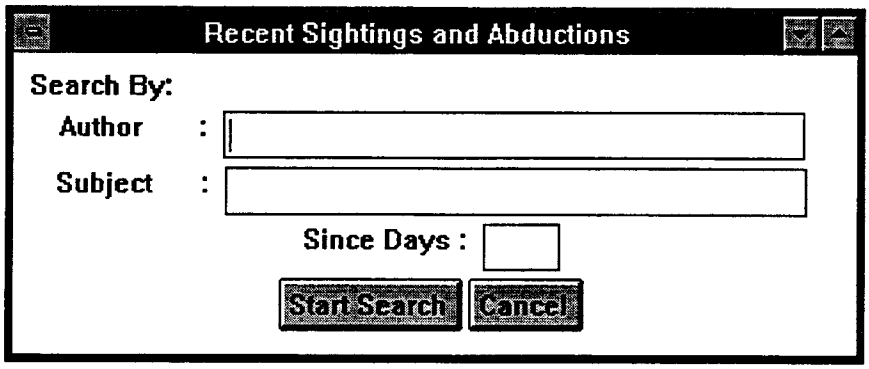

Figure 3.29 – Search Screen

Author

2. Type the screen name of the member whose messages you want to search for.

   If you leave this field blank, the search finds all messages that meet the remaining criteria from all members who have posted messages in this topic.

Subject

3. Type the subject you want to search for.

   The search only finds exact matches to the Subject string. You cannot search for a partial subject, or search on a string containing wildcard characters.

   If you leave this field blank, the search finds all messages that meet the remaining criteria with any subject.

Since Days

4. Type the number of days back in time to search. For example, typing 5 restricts the search to messages posted in the last 5 days.

   If you leave this field blank, the search finds all messages that meet the remaining criteria regardless of the date posted.

Start Search

5. Click on Start Search to begin the search.

   The results of the search are displayed in the same form used in this board for listing new messages.

   Read the messages as you would during a normal online session. When you exit the screen, the **Board Tools** Main Menu reappears.

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- or -

Cancel Click on Cancel to abort searching the messages.

The **Board Tools** Main Menu reappears.

Browsing a Board

The Browse function for boards displays the contents of the highlighted board in the board you are currently viewing. You use Browse to move down the message board levels – that is, from board to topic to message – while you are in **Board Tools**.

To browse a board, perform the following steps from the **Board Tools** Main Menu:

1. Highlight the topic you want to examine.
2. Click on Browse.

   Browse is always the default button.

   If you browse a board that contains other boards, the contents appear in the **Board Tools** Main Menu (boards containing boards), as shown in Figure 3.30:

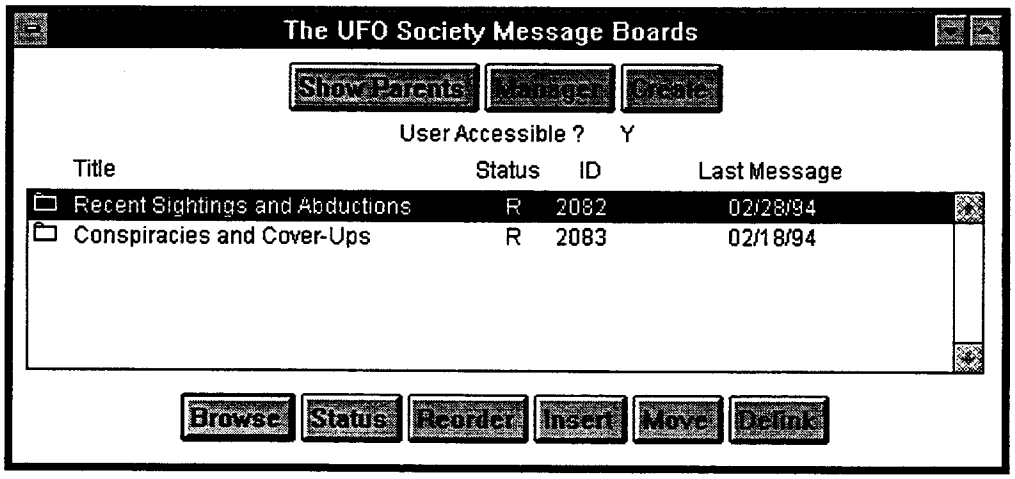

Figure 3.30 – **Board Tools** Main Menu (Board Contains Boards)

If you browse a board that contains topics, the contents are displayed in the **Board Tools** Main Menu (board contains topics), as shown in Figure 3.31:

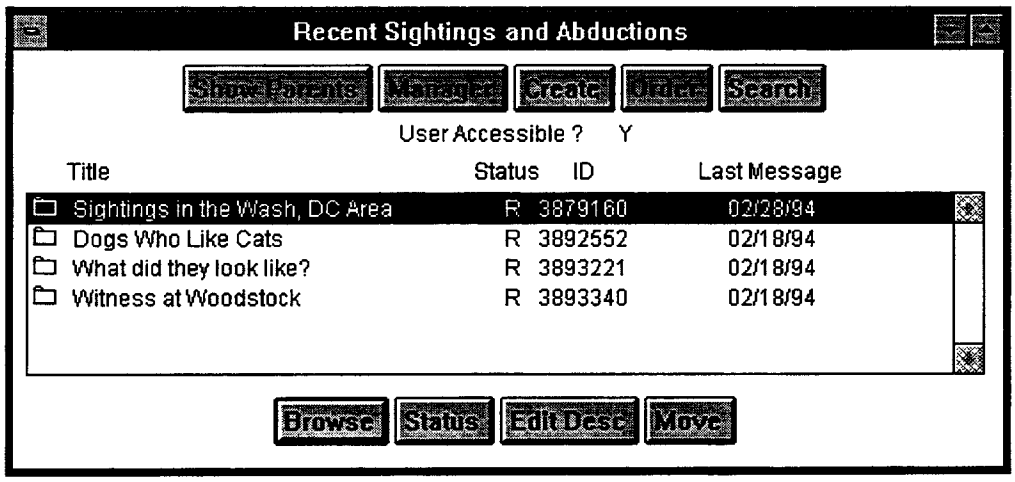

Figure 3.31 – **Board Tools** Main Menu (Board Contains Topics)

Browsing a Topic

The Browse function for topics lists the messages in a topic. Browse is the **Board Tools** equivalent of double-clicking on a topic in the Main Screen. You use Browse to move down the message board levels – that is, from board to topic to message –while you are in **Board Tools**.

To browse a topic, perform the following steps from the **Board Tools** Main Menu:

1. Click on Browse.

   The contents of this topic appear in the standard Show Topic Screen:

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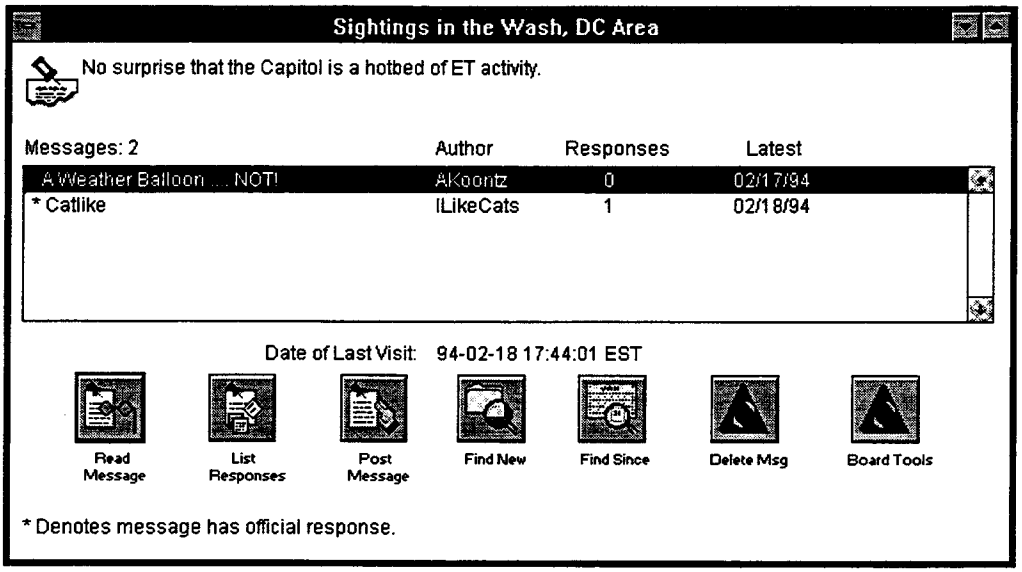

Figure 3.32 – Show Topic Screen with Sample Browse Results

You can use all the functions on the form to read or reply to messages, exactly as if you entered this screen in a normal online session.

2. Click on the close box in the upper left hand corner to close this form.

   The **Board Tools** Main Menu reappears.

Changing the Status of a Board or Topic (Delete, Hide, Release)

A board or topic has one of three statuses:

- Deleted — This topic is marked for deletion. You delete topics that have become irrelevant, useless, or contain information that you do not want in your board. Topics marked for deletion are deleted automatically by the America Online system once a day. You cannot actually delete a board from your area; for more information, see "Deleting a Board" on page 3-36.

- Hidden — This board or topic is hidden from members. You hide boards if you are temporarily reorganizing them or editing their content. In general, you will only hide a topic if it contains erroneous information, or information that violates America Online's Terms of Service. Sysops of the board can see hidden items.

- Released — All members can see and use this board or topic.

The status is displayed in the Status column of the **Board Tools** Main Menu, with the column entry corresponding to the first initial of the status (for example, status "R" means the topic is released), as shown in Figure 3.33:

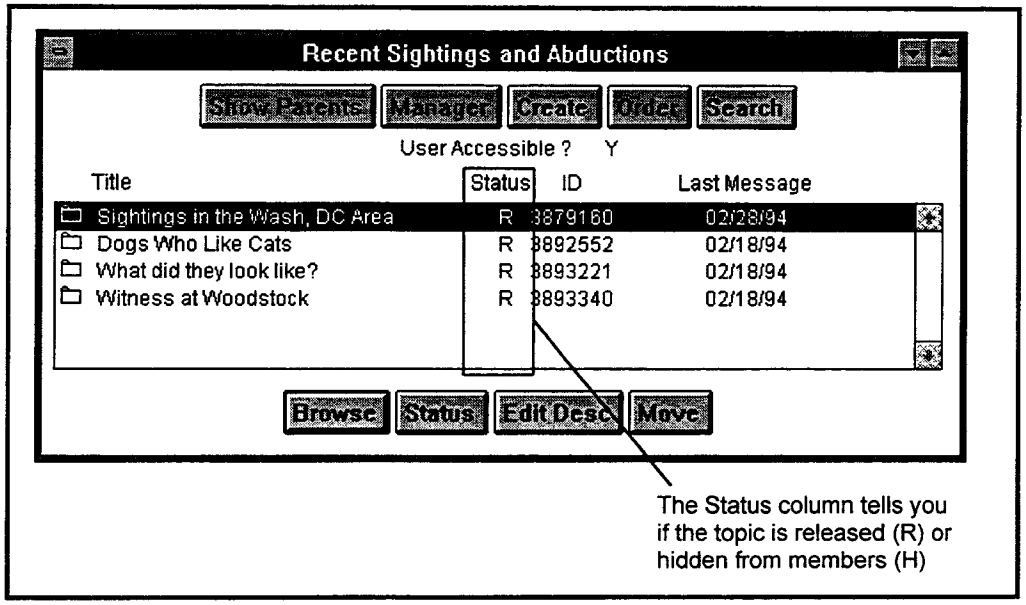

Figure 3.33 – Board Tools Main Menu (Topic) with Status Column

See "Deleting a Topic," "Hiding a Board or a Topic," and "Releasing a Board or a Topic," below, for instructions on changing a board's status.

Deleting a Board

Do not attempt to delete a board. Although the **Board Tools** program lets you mark a board for deletion, the board is not actually removed from your area. If you want a board removed from your area, contact your America Online producer.

Deleting a Topic

You can delete topics that have become irrelevant, useless, or contain information that you do not want in your board. You cannot see topics after you delete them; if you need to retrieve them, contact your America Online producer.

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To delete a topic, perform the following steps from the **Board Tools** Main Menu:

1. Highlight the board or topic you want to change.
2. Click on Status.

   The Status Screen appears:

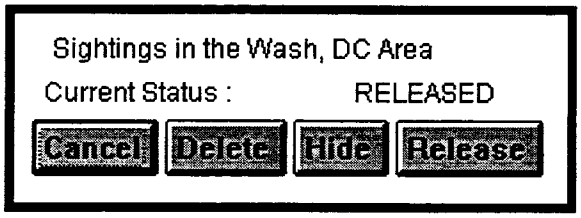

Figure 3.34 – Status Screen (Topic)

Delete

3. Click on Delete.

   The Delete Query Message appears, including a count of the topic's contents:

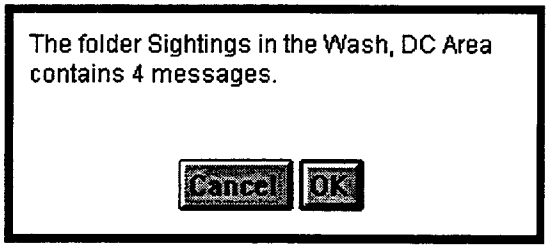

Figure 3.35 – Delete Query Message

Cancel

4. Click on Cancel to stop marking this topic for deletion.

   - or -

OK

Click on OK to confirm the deletion.

A confirmation message appears:

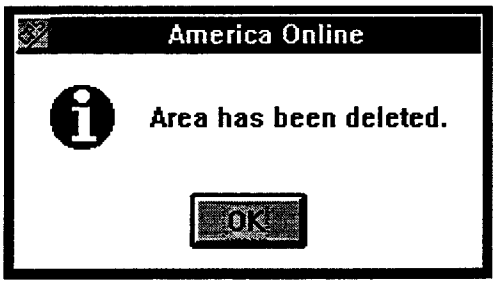

Figure 3.36 – Delete Confirmation Message

OK

5. Click on OK to clear the message.

   The Status Screen reappears, updated to reflect your change.

   Note: The **Board Tools** Main Menu Status column is not automatically updated to reflect the deletion. You must close the **Board Tools** Main Menu and then reopen it to see a new, accurate display.

Hiding a Board or a Topic

You can hide a board or a topic to make it temporarily unavailable online. You hide boards if you are reorganizing them or editing their content. In general, you will only hide a topic if it contains erroneous information, or information that violates America Online's Terms of Service.

Note: You cannot hide a "Top Level" board. A Top Level board is one that can be accessed directly from a window online, instead of from inside another board. If you attempt to hide a Top Level board, you will receive an error message. Contact your America Online producer for assistance.

To hide a board or a topic, perform the following steps from the **Board Tools** Main Menu:

1. Highlight the board or topic you want to change.

2. Click on Status.

   The Status Screen appears:

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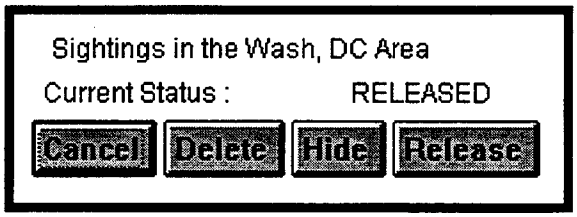

Figure 3.37 – Status Screen (Topic)

Hide 3. Click on Hide to hide the item.

A confirmation message appears:

Figure 3.38 – Hide Confirmation Message

OK 4. Click on OK to clear the message.

The Status Screen reappears, updated to reflect your change.

Note: the **Board Tools** Main Menu Status column is not automatically updated. You must exit and then re-enter the **Board Tools** Main Menu to update the Status column.

Releasing a Board or a Topic

You can make a hidden board or a hidden or deleted topic available to members again. You do this, for example, when you delete a topic in error, or when you have finished reorganizing a hidden board.

To release a board or topic, perform the following steps from the **Board Tools** Main Menu:

1. Highlight the board or topic you want to change.
2. Click on Status.

The Status Screen appears:

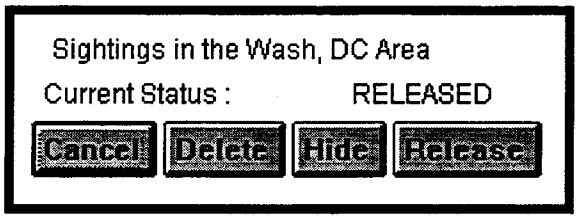

Figure 3.39 – Status Screen (Topic)

Release 3. Click on Release to release the item.

A confirmation message appears:

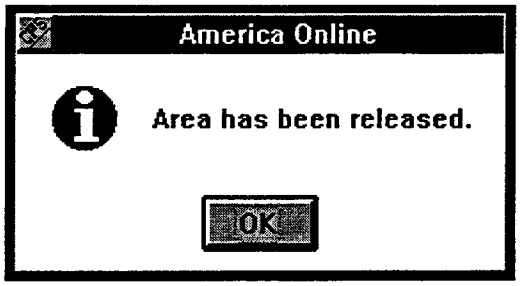

Figure 3.40 – Release Confirmation Message

OK 4. Click on OK to clear the message.

The Status Screen reappears, updated to reflect your change.

Note: The **Board Tools** Main Menu Status column is not automatically updated to reflect the release. You must close the **Board Tools** Main Menu and then reopen it to see a new, accurate display.

Moving a Topic

Use the Move function to move a topic from one board to another. A common example of why you would move a topic is when a member has created a topic on one board that is best suited for another. For example, if a member creates a topic called "Middle East" on a board devoted to national news, you can move it to a board devoted to world news.

To move a topic to another board, you must know the ID number of the destination board. ID numbers are listed in the ID column of the **Board Tools**

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Main Menu. You must be a sysop of both boards. If you do not know the ID numbers of your boards, or if you want to move a topic to a board where you are not a sysop, contact your America Online producer.

From the **Board Tools** Main Menu, perform the following steps:

1. Highlight the board or topic you want to move.
2. Click on Move.

   The Move Screen appears:

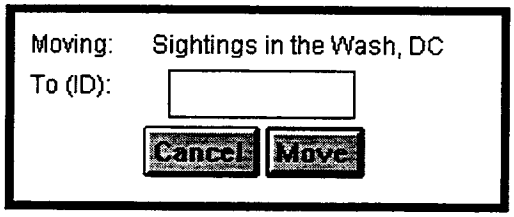

Figure 3.41 – Move Screen

Moving Contains the name of the board or topic you are moving.

To (ID)

3. Type the ID number of the board you want to move the board or topic to.

Cancel

4. Click on Cancel to stop moving the board.

   - or -

Move Click on Move to move the board.

The Move Query Message, stating the name of the board, where it was moved from, and where it is moving to:

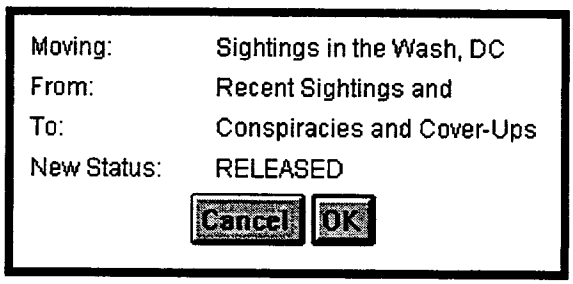

Figure 3.42 – Move Query Message

Cancel 5. Click on Cancel to stop moving the board

- or -

Move Click on Move to confirm the move.

A confirmation message appears:

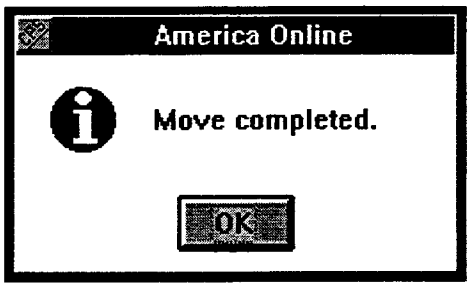

Figure 3.43 – Move Confirmation Message

OK 2. Click on OK to clear the message.

The **Board Tools** Main Menu reappears, updated to reflect your move.

Editing a Topic's Title or Description

Use the Edit Description function to edit the title or the description of an existing topic. On most boards members are allowed to create topics. You can edit the title or the description when the member's original entries are unsuitable, inaccurate, or poorly written.

To edit a topic's title or description, perform the following steps from the **Board Tools** Main Menu:

1. Highlight the topic you want to edit.
2. Click on Edit Desc.

   The Edit Description Screen appears:

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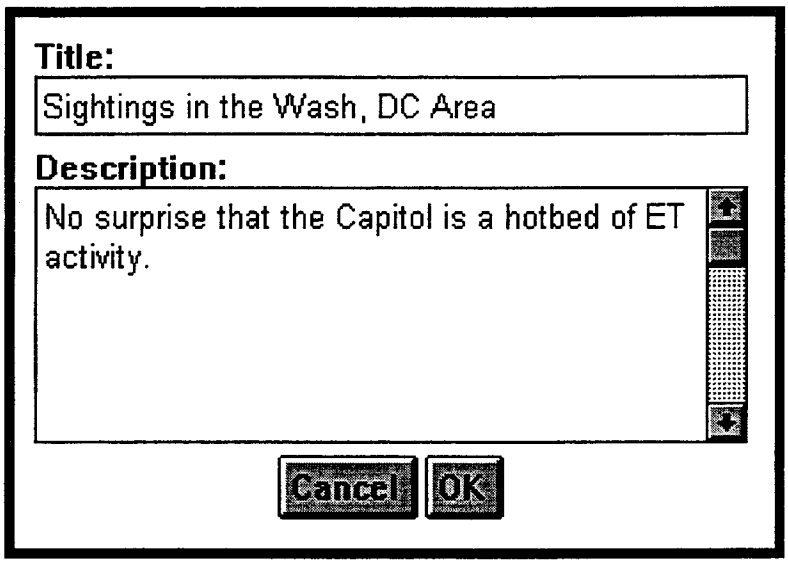

Figure 3.44 – Edit Description Screen

Title 3. Edit the 1-32 character title for this topic, if necessary.

Description 4. Edit the 1-100 character description for this topic, if necessary.

Cancel 5. Click on Cancel to stop editing the topic.

- or -

OK Click on OK to save the changes to the topic.

The **Board Tools** Main Menu reappears.

CHAPTER 4

Working with Software Libraries

What is a Software Library?

A software library is an area online that contains a collection of files. Figure 4.1 shows a software library as it appears to a normal member online:

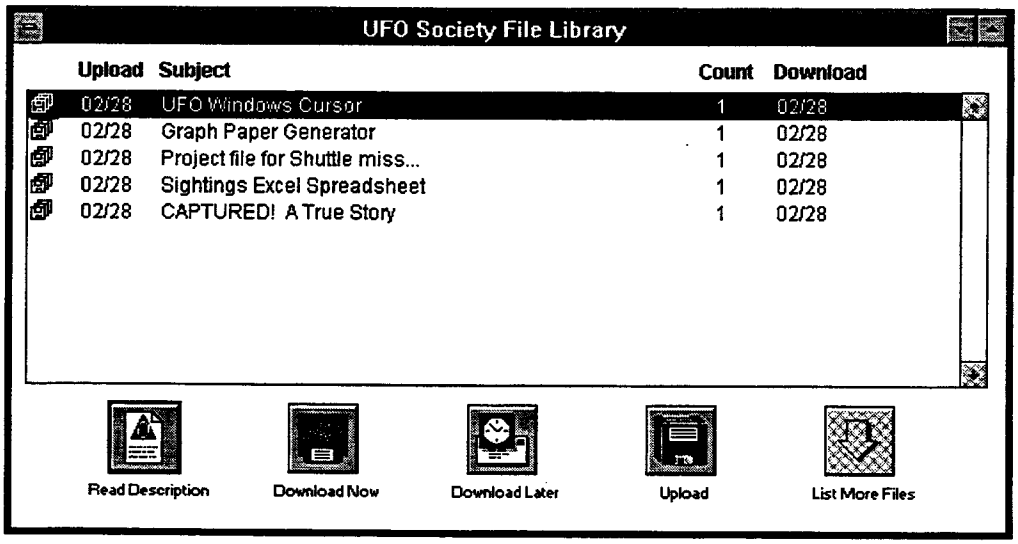
UFO Society File Library
Upload Subject Count Download
02/28 UFO Windows Cursor 1 02/28
02/28 Graph Paper Generator 1 02/28
02/28 Project file for Shuttle miss... 1 02/28
02/28 Sightings Excel Spreadsheet 1 02/28
02/28 CAPTURED! A True Story 1 02/28
Read Description
Download Now
Download Later
Upload
List More Files

Figure 4.1 – Software Library Main Screen (Normal, Windows platform)

Library screens on different platforms have cosmetic differences, but all have the same functions. Despite the name "library," members do not need to check out a file, and the file is not removed from the software library when a member wants to access it. Instead, members copy files from the library to their personal computers, a process called downloading.

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Members can also send copies of their own files to libraries, a process called uploading. Many libraries on America Online contain member uploads, thus letting members share and trade files with the whole online community.

As an information provider, you can maintain and manage a software library in your online area.

What Kinds of Files Can Software Libraries Have?

Any file that can be stored on the hard disk of a PC-compatible or Macintosh computer can be uploaded to a software library. This includes files that do not actually work on these computers, such as Newton® files. In other words, if it's on your computer, you can put it online.

While there are no physical limitations to the kinds of files a software library can contain, you may want to limit the contents of your software library based on a variety of factors. Also, America Online has certain restrictions on the content of your software library. The rest of this section discusses these issues. Some of these issues are also addressed in more detail in the section "Software Library Management Issues" on page 4-30.

Suitability

Most of the time, you accept or reject a file submitted to your software library by a member based on how suitable it is for your library. There is no single set of rules for what files are suitable content for your library. Libraries operated by software companies, for example, often are restricted to the company's own software updates and tips. General interest libraries tend to contain diverse types of files.

For most libraries, the broad needs of your target audience are often the best guidelines. If your library is dedicated to graphics files, a file of tips for using a spreadsheet program is probably not suitable. A list of popular Internet sites for finding good graphics could be suitable, however, even though the file is not a graphic itself.

Another factor in suitability is whether the file is acceptable under the America Online Terms of Service. For more information, see "Unacceptable Files" on page 4-3.

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Compressed Files

The exact rate of downloading depends on the speed at which the member is connected to America Online, plus external factors, such as the clarity or noisiness of the phone line. America Online's standard estimates are 8.5 kilobytes (K) per minute at 2400 bps, and 36.5K per minute at 9600 bps. In reality, most downloads, particularly graphics files, are faster.

Nonetheless, the larger the file is, the longer it takes to download. For this reason, it is standard practice on America Online to compress files that take more than a few minutes to download.

Compression replaces repeating sequences of data in a file with placeholders, according to a standard convention. For example, if you replaced every occurrence of the phrase "America Online" in this manual with the phrase "AOL," the manual would shorten by eleven letters each time. Software compression is usually much greater, providing in some cases up to a 10:1 reduction (for example, a 100K file could be compressed to as little as 10K).

There are many different compression techniques. To use a compressed file, the member has to expand it, or convert it back to its original state. America Online software contains built-in expanders for the most popular compression techniques – PK-ZIP® for DOS and Windows files, and Stuffit™ for Macintosh files – so that members do not have to expand these files themselves. For this reason, we recommend you encourage members to use these compression techniques. Your America Online producer can give you complete information on the compression techniques currently supported.

Note that most compression techniques include a "self-extract" option, which lets members create files that other members can expand themselves without any additional software. If the file is self-extracting, it can use any compression technique.

Unacceptable Files

By signing the America Online Information Provider Agreement, you or your organization agreed to observe both United States copyright law and America Online's Terms of Service.

United States copyright law states that the owner of a file has the sole right to determine how it is used. If you receive a file that you know is in violation of the owner's copyright – such as a commercial software program – you must remove it. You should also send a message to the uploader explaining that you are not accepting the file because it violates the owner's copyright.

America Online reserves the right to remove files from any software library at its sole discretion.

For more information about America Online's Terms of Service, see Chapter 2, "Online Rules, Conventions, and Etiquette." If you receive a file that you know is in violation of the Terms of Service, you must delete it. For more information, see "Copyright and Terms of Service Violations" on page 4-36. America Online reserves the right to remove files from any software library at its sole discretion.

How Do I Get a Library?

Your America Online producer will create your software library for your area online. You work with your producer to determine how you want your software library to be configured, what screen names you want as the sysops for the library, and whether you need one or more libraries.

Configuring Your Library

When you work with America Online to create your library, you must decide whether or not you want to accept submissions of files from members. Most libraries accept files from members. Some libraries, such as those for distributing software upgrades, are configured so that only sysops can upload files.

Sysop Configuration Options

The sysop for the library performs day-to-day management of the software library. A software library can have up to eight sysops. Only sysops can use the sysop software library tools described in this chapter, and only on the libraries they control. Being a sysop in one library does not automatically give you rights to other libraries.

Sysops are added to the library by screen name, not by member. This means that other screen names on your account do not have sysop access to the library. More than one screen name in your account can be a sysop, however.

Software libraries have six different options that govern how much control a sysop has in the library. Sysops can have different rights from each other. For example, the library can be configured so that all sysops see hidden files, but only one can release them for general use. When you work with your

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America Online producer to create your library, you will determine which of these options you want to give your sysops. The options are:

- Uploads Permitted — Lets the sysop submit files to the library.
- Delete Files — Lets the sysop delete files from the library.
- View Hidden Files — Lets the sysop view hidden files.
- Modify File Descriptions — Lets the sysop change the file descriptions sent by members with their uploads. Other members can read file descriptions online.
- Release Files — Lets the sysop release a file for all members to see.
- Receive Ask the Staff Mail — Lets the sysop receive Ask the Staff messages written by members and sent from the library. At least one sysop in the library must have this right. For more information, see "The Ask the Staff Button" on page 4-9.

If the number of files in your library is over 300, you may want to split the library into several smaller libraries, with each library centered around one or two subjects. This lets members find the files they want faster. Your America Online producer will work with you to determine the optimal structure for the library system in your area. For more information, see "Working with Multiple Libraries" on page 4-36.

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Using the Sysop Software Library Tools

When sysops of the software library access that library, their screen is slightly different from the standard member software library screen. Figure 4.2 shows a sysop's software library screen:

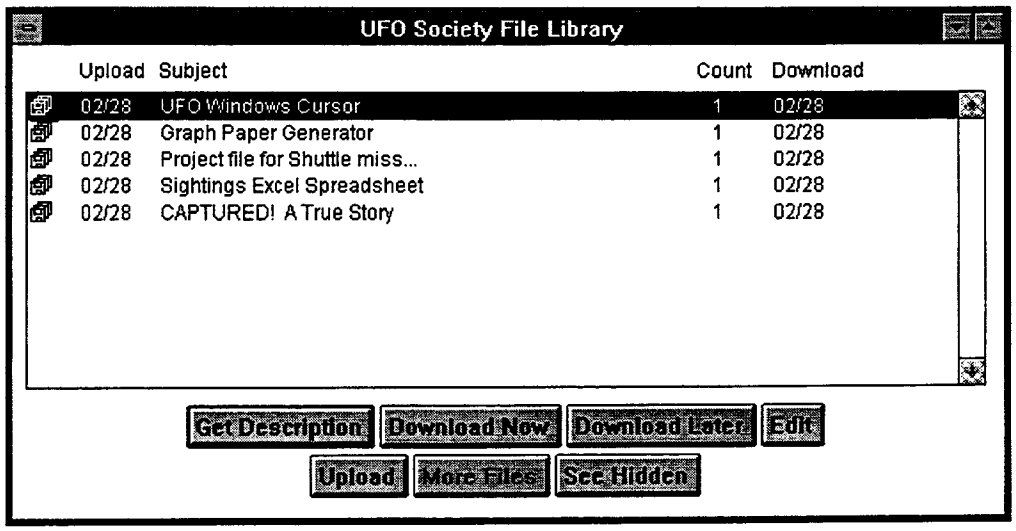

Figure 4.2 – Software Library Main Screen (Sysop, Windows platform)

If you compare this screen with the screen in Figure 4.1, you will see that the five functions on the standard member's screen are also on this screen. In addition, sysops have two extra buttons, "Edit" and "See Hidden." These buttons let sysops access the special tools to manage libraries.

All functions that sysops can perform, including functions available to normal members, are described in the following sections. If you are completely new to America Online software libraries, you may want to begin with the standard functions, such as reading a file description and downloading a file, before you try using the sysop tools.

Using the Scrollbars

When you enter the software library, the list of files appears inside the window. If there are more files in the library than can fit in the list, you can use the scrollbar on the right side of the list to move a new section of the list into the window. The scrollbar only operates when there are more files than can fit in the list; otherwise, it is inactive. Figure 4.3 shows active and inactive scrollbars:

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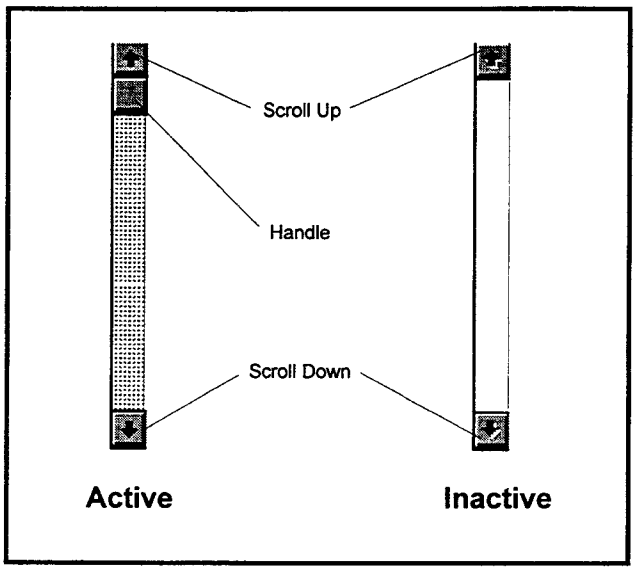

Figure 4.3 – Active and Inactive Scrollbars

You can click on the Scroll Down arrow to display a section of the list below the one currently displayed. To display a section of the list above the one currently displayed, you can click on the Scroll Up arrow.

You can also move the list by clicking on and holding the "handle," the square box inside the scrollbar, and moving it up and down with your mouse.

Displaying More Files

When you enter a software library, the files in the library are displayed in the list inside the window. America Online only transmits 20 names at a time to the list. If the library contains more than 20 files, the More Files button on the Main Screen becomes active.

You can click on the More Files button to display the next 20 files in the list. As the messages are transmitted, you see a wait cursor (hourglass in Windows and PC Geos, rotating disk in Macintosh), then new files appear in the list.

Reading a File Description

The file description is a short passage of text containing information about the file written by the member who uploaded it. The File Description Screen also contains the downloading buttons that are available on the Main Screen. They function in the same way on both screens. For complete instructions on downloading a file from either the File Description Screen or the Main Screen,

see "Downloading a File" on page 4-10, and "Saving a File for Later Downloading" on page 4-14.

To read a file description, perform the following steps from the Main Screen:

1. Highlight the file whose description you want to read by clicking on it once.

2. Click on Get Description.

   - or -

   Double-click on the highlighted file.

   The File Description Screen appears:

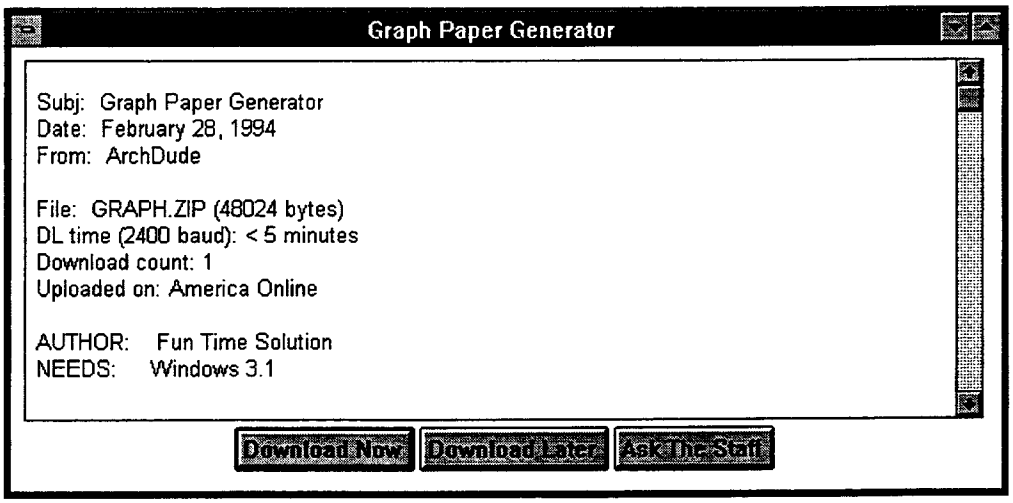

Figure 4.4 – Sample File Description Screen

3. Click on the close box in the upper left corner of the window to close the File Description Screen.

   You can also download the file using one of the two download buttons. For complete instructions on downloading a file, see "Downloading a File" on page 4-10, and "Saving a File for Later Downloading" on page 4-14.

   You can also click on the Ask the Staff button, which is explained in the following section. Since you are a sysop, and thus one of the recipients of Ask the Staff

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messages, you will almost never use this function yourself.

After you close the File Description Screen, the Main Screen reappears.

The Ask the Staff Button

The Ask the Staff feature lets members send mail messages to sysops from inside the software library. Members send messages when they have questions about the suitability or use of a particular file. Note that the member does not know who is receiving the message.

Since you are a sysop, and thus one of the recipients of Ask the Staff messages, you will almost never use this function yourself for your own library.

You and your America Online producer will decide which sysops you want to receive the Ask the Staff messages. At least one sysop must receive Ask the Staff messages. For more information, see the section "Configuration Options" on page 4-4.

To send an Ask the Staff message from the File Description Screen, perform the following steps:

1. Click on Ask the Staff.

   The Ask the Staff Message Screen appears:

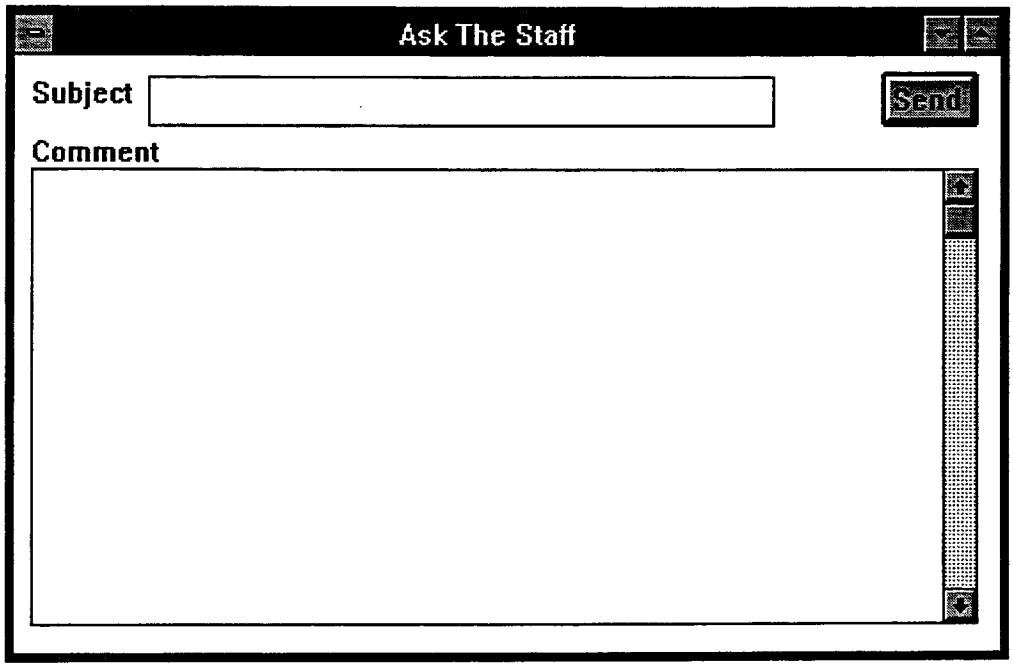

Figure 4.5 – Ask the Staff Message Screen

Subject 2. Type a 1-32 character subject for the message.

Comment 3. Type the message you want to send.

Ask the Staff messages can be up to 8K of text on any America Online platform. The Windows and Macintosh versions can accept messages up to 32K in length.

Send 4. Click on Send to send the message.

- or -

Click on the close box in the upper left corner of the window to close the Ask the Staff Message Screen without sending a message.

The File Description Screen reappears.

Downloading a File

Downloading is the process of copying a file from a software library onto your personal computer. One of your primary duties as a sysop is downloading new uploads that are still hidden in order to check them for viruses and for

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functionality. For more information, see "Virus Checking" on page 4-35 and "Functionality Checking" on page 4-36.

When you download a file, America Online transmits it to your computer, which stores the file in a directory/folder on your hard disk. If the file is compressed with a compression technique supported by America Online (PK-ZIP for DOS and Windows files, Stuffit for Macintosh files), America Online automatically expands the file after you sign off the service.

You can download a file from both the Main Screen and the File Description Screen. You can also download hidden files, if you are viewing the Hidden File List. The process of downloading files is always the same, whether they are hidden or released. For more information on finding new, hidden uploads, see "Viewing Hidden Files" on 4-19.

To download a file, perform the following steps from either the Main Screen or the File Description Screen:

1. (Main Screen only) Highlight the file you want to download by clicking on it once.

   If you are in the File Description Screen, you can only download the file whose description you are viewing.

2. Click on Download Now.

   The Download File Dialog appears:

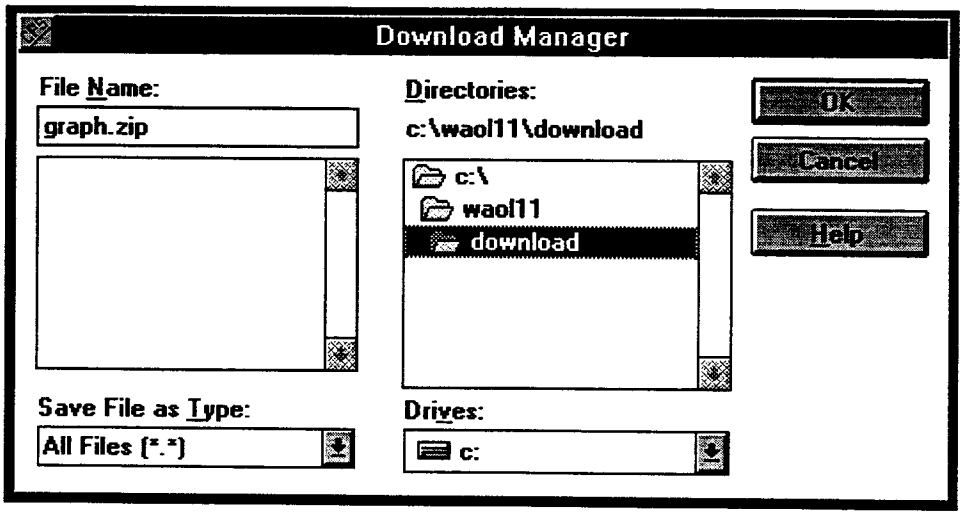

Figure 4.6 – Sample Download File Dialog

File Name

3. Type the name that you want this file to have on your hard disk.

   In most cases you do not change this field. For a discussion of changing file names, see "Downloading a Macintosh File to an MS-DOS Computer" on page 4-13.

Directories or Folder

4. Select the directory or folder where you want to download this file. By default, the software selects the directory or folder for downloads that it created when you installed the software (\DOWNLOAD on PC Geos and Windows, "Online Downloads" on Macintosh).

5. Select the appropriate information in the other fields as necessary. Due to differences in the computers, the Download File Dialogs are not identical on each America Online platform.

OK

6. Click on OK to start downloading the file.

   The File Transfer Scale appears:

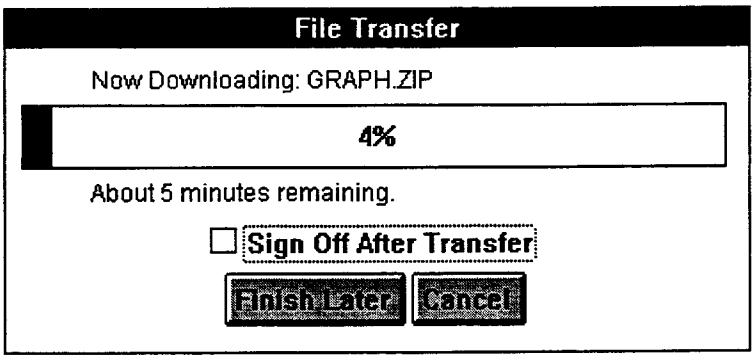

Figure 4.7 – Sample File Transfer Scale

Sign Off After Transfer

7. Click on the Sign Off After Transfer checkbox if you want to disconnect from America Online as soon as the file is downloaded.

   - or -

Finish Later

Click on Finish Later if you need to stop the download but want to restart it later.

- or -

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Cancel Click on Cancel if you need to stop the download.

The scale represents the percentage of the file that has already been downloaded to your hard disk. When the scale reaches 100%, the download is completed.

The Main Screen or the File Description screen reappears.

Downloading a Macintosh File to an MS-DOS Computer

In most cases, you can download a file to your hard disk and store it under the same name that it has in the software library. The exception is a Macintosh file that you download to an MS-DOS computer. Many files, especially graphics files, work on both types of computers, so this is a common event.

Macintosh files can have names up to 32 characters in length, including spaces and punctuation marks. MS-DOS files are limited to 11 characters total, with the last 3 separated from the first 8 by a period (.). If you try to download a Macintosh file that violates MS-DOS naming standards, America Online changes the name so that it follows MS-DOS standards. Figure 4.8 shows an example of a file name change:

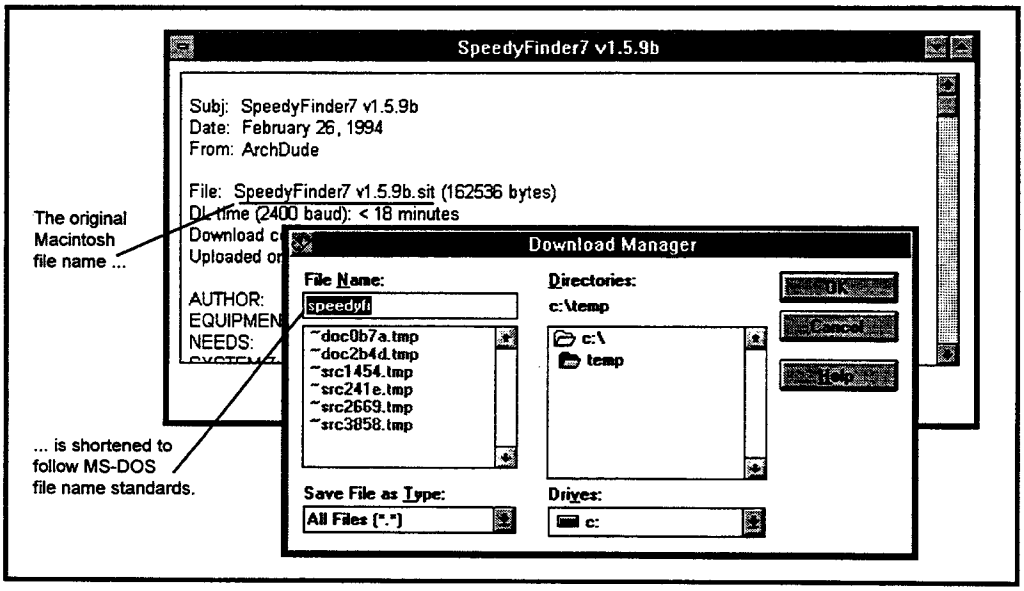

Figure 4.8 – Example of File Name Change

You should always inspect the name created by America Online to make sure it is suitable for your use. If it is not suitable – for example, it is the same name as a file already in your download directory – change the name.

Saving a File for Later Downloading

Instead of downloading a file immediately, you can save its name to the Download Manager, an America Online tool. Download Manager lets you save several file names for downloading, including files from different libraries, and then download them all at once, leaving you free to perform other tasks while your computer is occupied. If you plan on downloading several files, particularly if they are large, saving the files to Download Manager is a more efficient method.

You can save files to Download Manager from both the Main Screen and the File Description Screen. You can also save hidden files, if you are viewing the Hidden File List. For more information on hidden files, see "Viewing Hidden Files" on 4-19.

To save a file for later downloading, perform the following steps from either the Main Screen or the File Description Screen:

1. (Main Screen only) Highlight the file you want to download by clicking on it once.

   If you are in the File Description Screen, you can only save the file whose description you are viewing.

2. Click on Download Later.

   The Download Manager Confirmation Message appears:

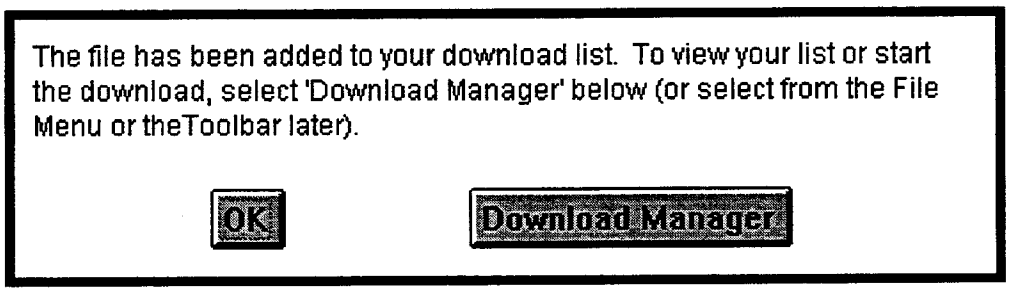
The file has been added to your download list. To view your list or start the download, select 'Download Manager' below (or select from the File Menu or theToolbar later).
OK
Download Manager

Figure 4.9 – Download Manager Confirmation Message

OK

3. Click on OK to clear the message.

   The Main Screen or the File Description screen reappears.

   - or -

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Download Manager

Click on Download Manager to enter the Download Manager Screen and begin downloading the file.

If this is the last file you plan to download, you can enter Download Manager from this message. You can also enter Download Manager at any time from the America Online File Menu.

Uploading a File

Uploading a file means sending a copy of a file on your personal computer to an America Online software library. The copy is made automatically. You do not have to make a special "uploading" version of your file, and your original file is not affected in any way. However, you may need to create a compressed version of the file if it is very large. For more information about compressing files, see "Compressed Files" on page 4-3.

As a sysop, you will upload files frequently to make them available to the members who use your library. You can only upload one file at a time. There is no equivalent function to Download Manager for uploads. If you have an extremely large number of files to upload – for example, to populate a new library – contact your America Online producer to discuss alternatives.

When members and sysops upload files to libraries, their uploads are stored in the Hidden Files List, which only sysops can see. You must release uploaded files before members can download them. For more information, see "Releasing Files" on page 4-23.

To upload a file to a software library, perform the following steps from the Main Screen:

1. Click on Upload.

   The Upload File Screen appears:

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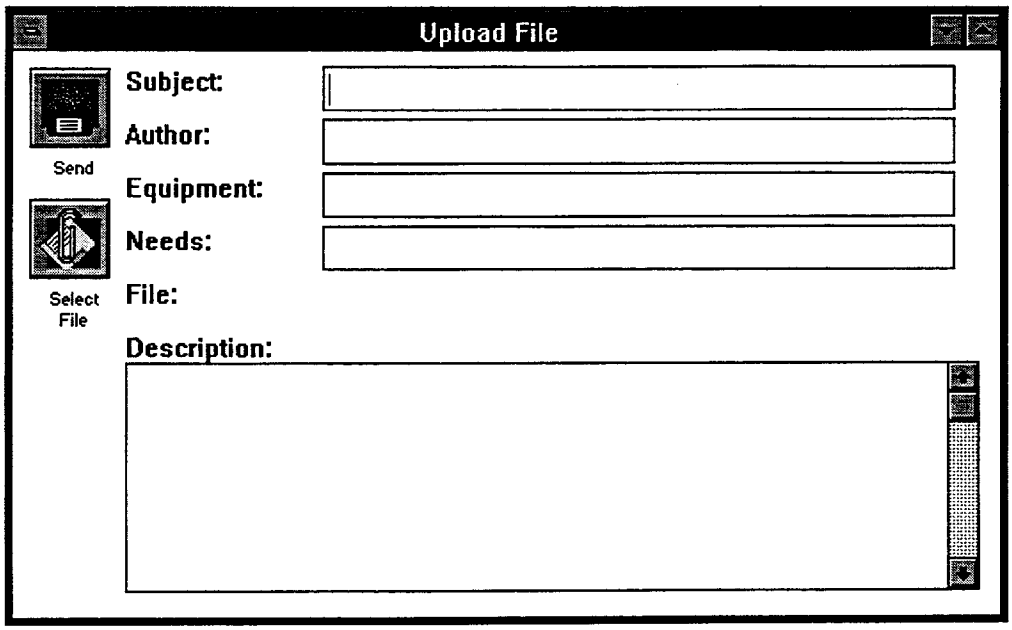

Figure 4.10 – Upload File Screen

Subject 2. Type a 1-32 character descriptive subject name for this file.

This field is what appears in the Main Screen online.

Author 3. Type the name of the author of the file. This is an optional step. You are limited to 32 characters.

You do not need to type your name or your screen name in addition to the name of the author. When members read the file description online, America Online automatically adds your screen name to the description as the uploader of the file.

Equipment 4. Type any specialized equipment that is required to use this file effectively. This is an optional step. You are limited to 32 characters.

Do not include general and obvious requirements in this field, such as "computer," "mouse," and "monitor." Include equipment that varies from member to member, such as a type of monitor resolution, or a bit-size of a sound card.

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Needs

5. Type any essential equipment, either software or hardware, without which this file cannot be used. This is an optional step. You are limited to 32 characters.

   Do not include general and obvious requirements in this field, such as "computer," "mouse," and "monitor." Include specific requirements. For example, if the file is a TIFF graphic, you should enter "TIFF graphic viewer" as a requirement, since without some sort of TIFF viewer the member cannot use the file.

File

This is filled in after you select the file from your hard disk. See Step 7. You cannot directly edit this field.

Description

6. Type a description of the file. You are limited to 32K of text.

   Your description should be complete enough so that members know exactly what the file is and does, and what hardware and software it requires. You should not include instructions on installing or using the file, since the member may not be online to read the instructions. For more information, see "File Descriptions" on page 4-32.

Select File

7. Click on Select File.

   The Attach File Dialog appears:

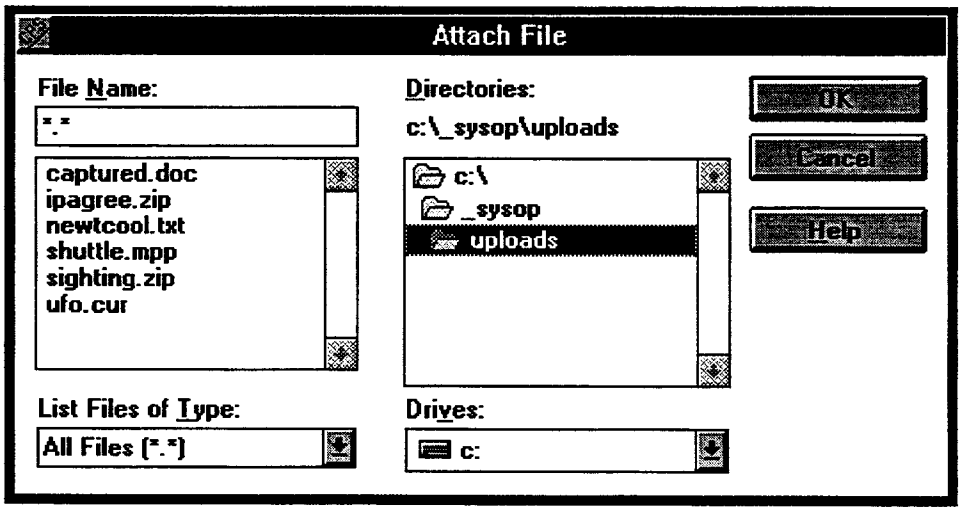

Figure 4.11 – Attach File Dialog

File Name

8. Type the name that you want this file to have on your hard disk.

   If the file is displayed in the file list, you can also select the file by double-clicking on it.

Directories or **Folder**

9. Select the directory or folder on your hard disk where the file you want to upload is stored.

10. Select the appropriate information in the other fields as necessary. Due to differences in the computers, the Attach File Dialogs are not identical on each America Online platform.

OK

11. Click on OK to start uploading the file.

    The File Transfer Scale appears:

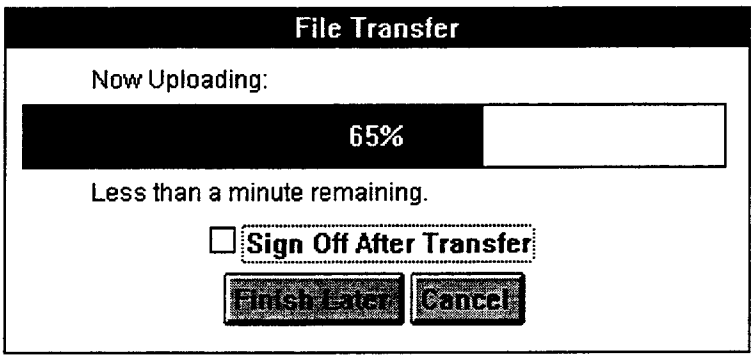

Figure 4.12 – Sample File Transfer Scale

Sign Off After Transfer

12. Click on the Sign Off After Transfer checkbox if you want to disconnect from America Online as soon as the file is uploaded.

- or -

Cancel

Click on Cancel if you need to stop the upload.

The scale represents the percentage of the file that has already been downloaded to your hard disk. When the scale reaches 100%, the upload is completed. A confirmation message appears:

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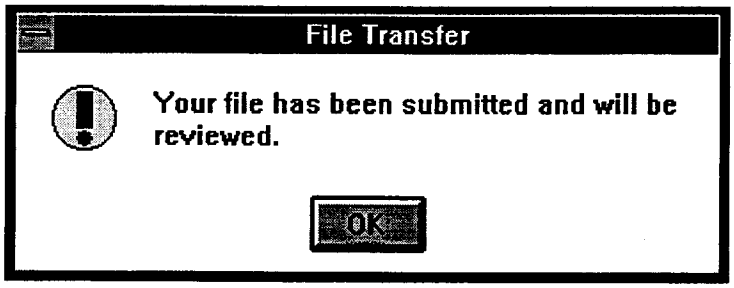

Figure 4.13 – Upload Confirmation Message

OK 13. Click on OK to clear the message.

The Main Screen reappears.

Viewing Hidden Files

Hidden files are files that have been uploaded by members, but have not been reviewed and approved by sysops. To prevent the accidental distribution of an inappropriate or defective file, these new uploads are not visible until you or another sysop of your library releases them. For information about releasing files, see "Releasing Files" on page 4-23, and "Software Library Management Issues" on page 4-30.

To access the hidden files, you must be a sysop with the right to view the hidden files. For more information about rights, see "Sysop Configuration Options" on page 4-4.

To access the hidden files, perform the following steps from the Main Screen:

1. Click on See Hidden.

   The Hidden Files Screen containing the currently hidden files appears over the Main Screen:

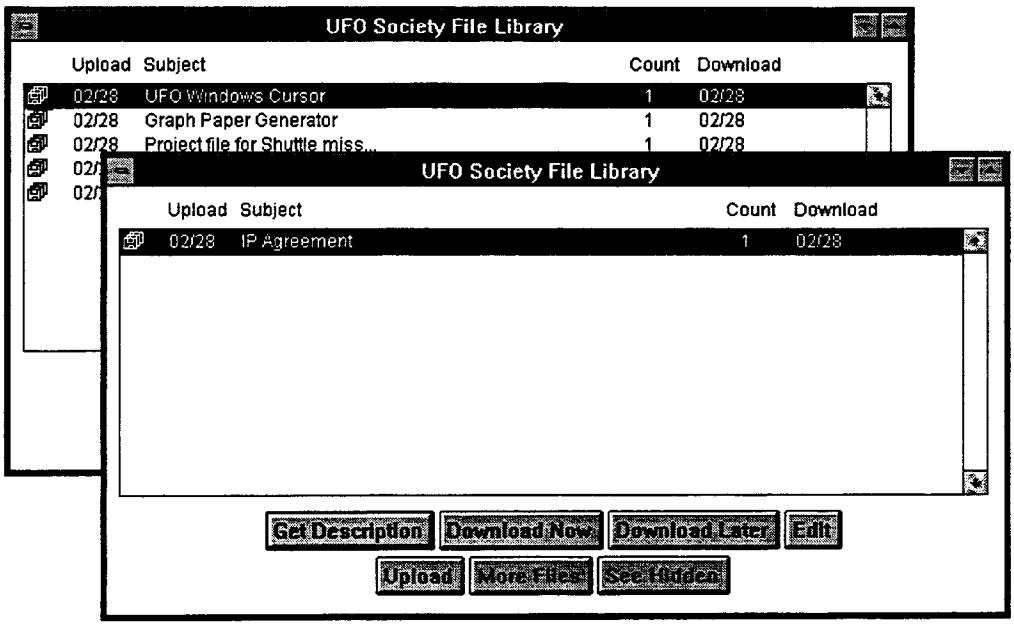

Figure 4.14 – Hidden Files Screen Displayed over Main Screen

Note that the new Hidden Files Screen looks exactly like the Main Screen, except that the See Hidden button is dimmed on the Hidden Files Screen.

2. Click on the close box in the upper left corner to close the Hidden Files Screen.

   You can also perform any of the functions available at the bottom of the Hidden Files Screen.

Modifying File Descriptions

Members write file descriptions, or short passage of text containing information about the file, when they upload files. Often, however, these descriptions require editing, usually to add additional information. You can edit the file descriptions of any file in your library. Usually, you edit file descriptions of newly uploaded files before you release them.

To edit the description of a file, perform the following steps from the Main Screen or the Hidden Files Screen:

1. Highlight the file whose description you want to edit by clicking on it once.

2. Click on Edit.

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The Edit File Screen appears:

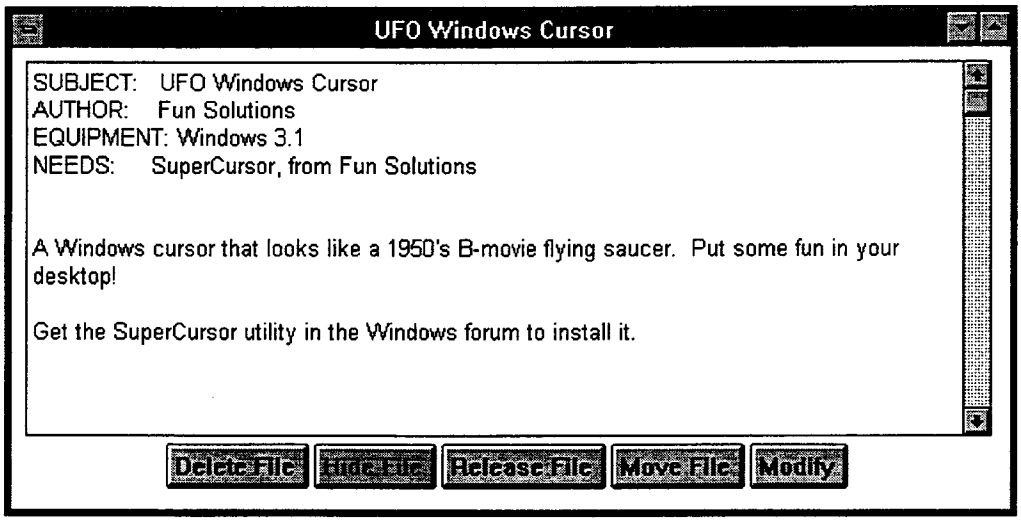
UFO Windows Cursor
SUBJECT: UFO Windows Cursor
AUTHOR: Fun Solutions
EQUIPMENT: Windows 3.1
NEEDS: SuperCursor, from Fun Solutions
A Windows cursor that looks like a 1950's B-movie flying saucer. Put some fun in your desktop!
Get the SuperCursor utility in the Windows forum to install it.
Delete File
Hide File
Release File
Move File
Modify

Figure 4.15 – Sample Edit File Screen

In this example, the description does not contain enough information for members.

3. Click on the location in the file description where you want to edit the text.

   A cursor appears.

   The Edit File Screen is a basic text editor. You can use all the text editing functions available in the America Online software, such as cut, copy, and paste. You can also paste text from a text editor into the file description.

4. Make all desired edits to the file description.

   Figure 4.16 shows an example of an edited file description:

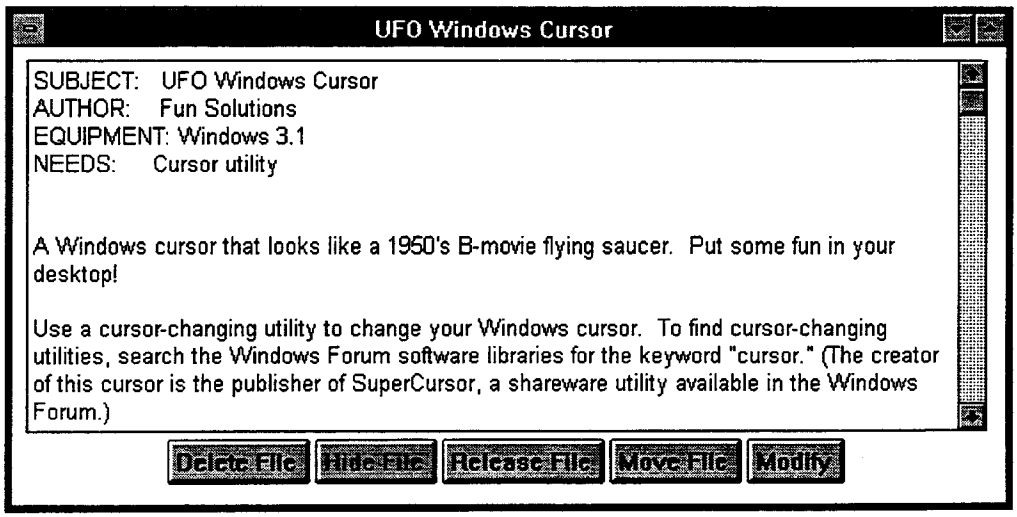
UFO Windows Cursor
SUBJECT: UFO Windows Cursor
AUTHOR: Fun Solutions
EQUIPMENT: Windows 3.1
NEEDS: Cursor utility
A Windows cursor that looks like a 1950's B-movie flying saucer. Put some fun in your desktop!
Use a cursor-changing utility to change your Windows cursor. To find cursor-changing utilities, search the Windows Forum software libraries for the keyword "cursor." (The creator of this cursor is the publisher of SuperCursor, a shareware utility available in the Windows Forum.)
Delete File
Hide File
Release File
Move File
Modify

Figure 4.16 – Example of an Edited Description

Modify

5. Click on Modify.

   The edits you made are saved. A confirmation message appears:

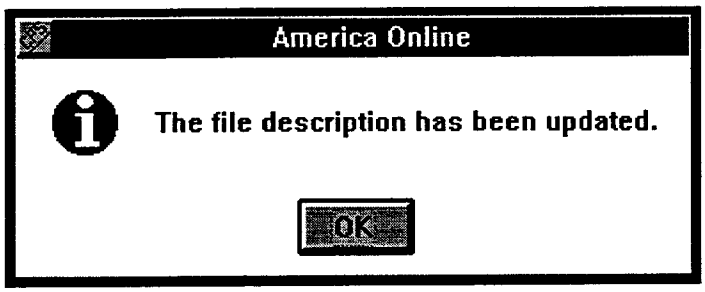

Figure 4.17 – Modify Confirmation Screen

OK

6. Click on OK to clear the message.

   The Edit File Screen reappears. You can now make other edits, or perform any other function.

7. Click on the close box in the upper left corner to close the Edit File Screen.

   The Main Screen or the Hidden Files Screen reappears.

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Releasing Files

In order for a file to be available to all members, you must release it. Releasing a file makes it appear in the Main Screen and removes it from the Hidden File Screen. Before you release a file, you must make sure that it contains no viruses, that it works, and that the file description conforms to the standards for your library.

To release a hidden file, perform the following steps from the Hidden Files Screen:

1. Check the file for viruses and for functionality.

   For more information, see "Virus Checking" on page 4-35 and "Functionality Checking" on page 4-36.

2. Access the Hidden Files Screen. For more information, see "Viewing Hidden Files" on page 4-19.

3. Highlight the file you want to release by clicking on it once.

4. Click on Edit.

   The Edit File Screen appears:

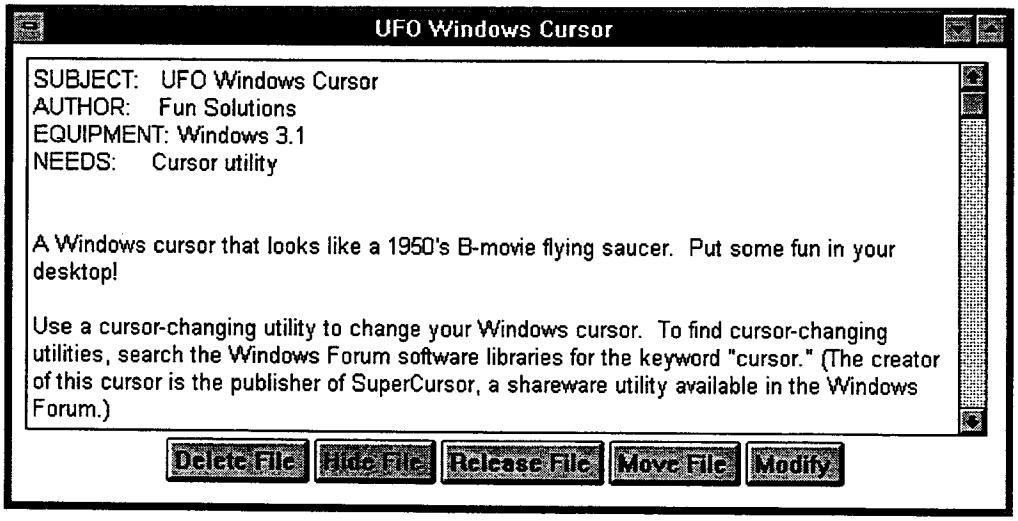
UFO Windows Cursor
SUBJECT: UFO Windows Cursor
AUTHOR: Fun Solutions
EQUIPMENT: Windows 3.1
NEEDS: Cursor utility
A Windows cursor that looks like a 1950's B-movie flying saucer. Put some fun in your desktop!
Use a cursor-changing utility to change your Windows cursor. To find cursor-changing utilities, search the Windows Forum software libraries for the keyword "cursor." (The creator of this cursor is the publisher of SuperCursor, a shareware utility available in the Windows Forum.)
Delete File
Hide File
Release File
Move File
Modify

Figure 4.18 – Sample Edit File Screen

5. Edit the file description as necessary to make it conform to the standards for your forum. For a discussion of file descriptions, see "File Descriptions" on page 4-32.

Release File 6. Click on Release File.

A confirmation message appears:

Figure 4.19 – Release Confirmation Message

OK 7. Click on OK to clear the message.

The Edit File Screen reappears on the Macintosh and PC Geos platforms. On the Windows platform, the Hidden Files Screen reappears, and you do not have to perform Step 5.

8. Click on the close box in the upper left corner to close the Edit File Screen.

The Hidden Files Screen reappears.

Note: Neither the Hidden Files Screen or the Main Screen is automatically updated to reflect the file release. You must close both screens and then reopen them to see a new, accurate display.

Hiding Files

You can hide a currently released file, making it unavailable to normal members. Hiding a file moves it from the Main Screen to the Hidden Files Screen, so you or other sysops can still access the file if you need to.

You hide files whenever there are questions about their propriety or integrity. For example, if members report that a currently released file contains or may contain a virus, you must immediately hide the file until you have re-checked it. For more information, see "Software Library Management Issues" on page 4-30.

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To hide a currently released file, perform the following steps from the Main Screen:

1. Highlight the file you want to hide by clicking on it once.

2. Click on Edit.

   The Edit File Screen appears:

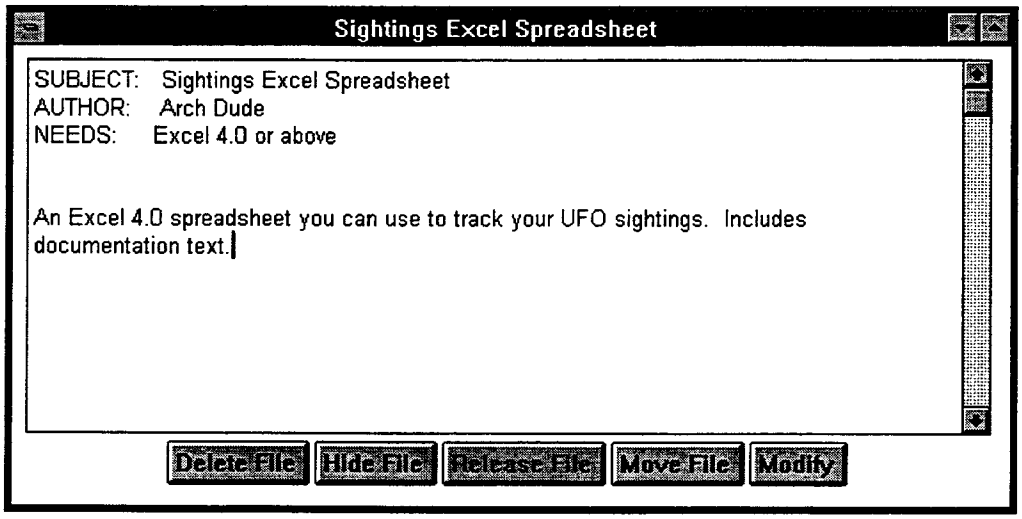

Figure 4.20 – Sample Edit File Screen

Hide File

3. Click on Hide File.

   A confirmation message appears:

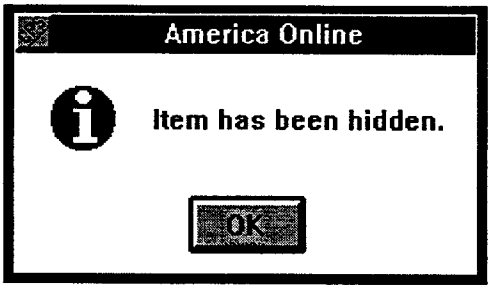

Figure 4.21 – Hide Confirmation Message

OK

4. Click on OK to clear the message.

   The Edit File Screen reappears.

5. Click on the close box in the upper left corner to close the Edit File Screen.

   The Main Screen reappears.

   Note: Neither the Main Screen or the Hidden Files Screen is automatically updated to reflect the file hiding. You must close both screens and then reopen them to see a new, accurate display.

Deleting Files

You can delete files to remove them permanently from your library. You must delete a file if you determine that it has a virus, or is otherwise unsuitable or defective. You can also delete currently released files. For example, a new version of a program may appear, thus requiring you to delete the current, now obsolete version.

Deleted files are purged from America Online once a day. If you delete a file in error, there is a possibility that your producer can be recover it before it is purged. Contact your America Online producer for assistance.

To delete a file, perform the following steps from the Main Screen or the Hidden Files Screen:

1. Highlight the file you want to delete by clicking on it once.

2. Click on Edit.

   The Edit File Screen appears:

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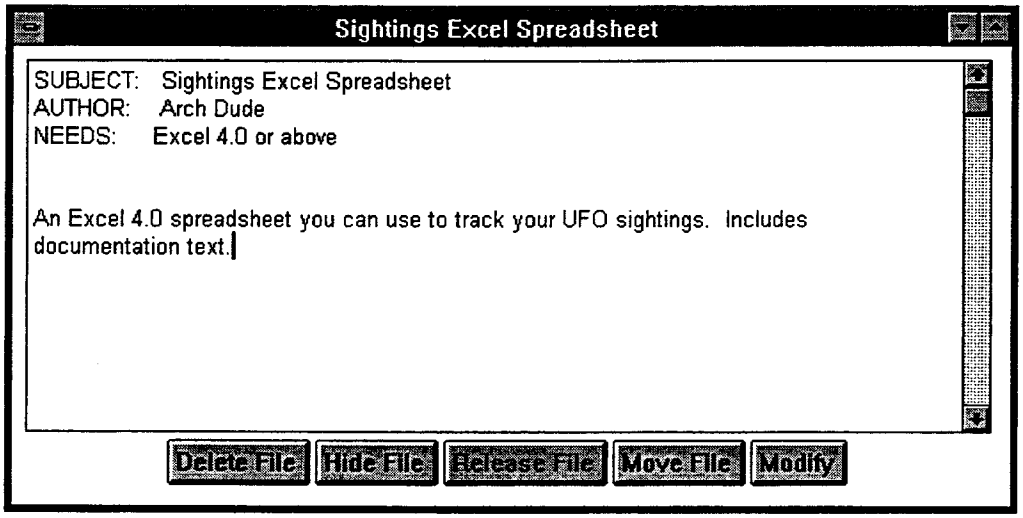

Figure 4.22 – Sample Edit File Screen

Delete File

3. Click on Delete File.

   A confirmation message appears:

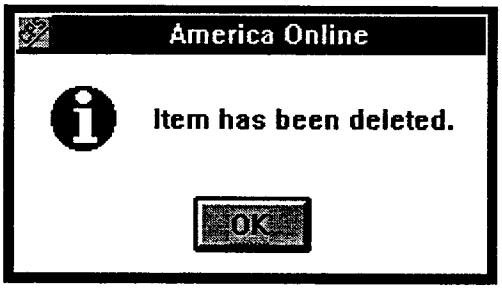

Figure 4.23 – Delete Confirmation Message

OK

4. Click on OK to clear the message.

   The Edit File Screen reappears.

5. Click on the close box in the upper left corner to close the Edit File Screen.

   The Main Screen or the Hidden Files Screen reappears.

   Note: Neither the Main Screen nor the Hidden Files Screen is automatically updated to reflect the file deletion. You must close the screen and then reopen it to see a new, accurate display.

Moving Files from One Library to Another

You can move files from one library to another library, including libraries where you are not a sysop. The file's title and file description move with it, so you do not have to rewrite them when you move the file.

Moving removes the file from your library. There is no way to copy a file from one library to another, or to attach a file directly from a library to an America Online mail message.

You normally move files to maintain your area. For example, if you have two libraries and a new upload to one is more suitable to the other, you can move the file instead of re-uploading it. Also, in certain circumstances, such as copyright or Terms of Service violations, you may move a file from your area to your America Online producer's private library.

To move the file, you must know the ID number of the library you want to move the file to. You cannot find a software library's number online. Your America Online producer, or the sysop of your destination library, can tell you the ID number.

To move a file from one library to another, perform the following steps from the Main Screen or the Hidden Files Screen:

1. Highlight the file you want to move by clicking on it once.

2. Click on Edit.

   The Edit File Screen appears:

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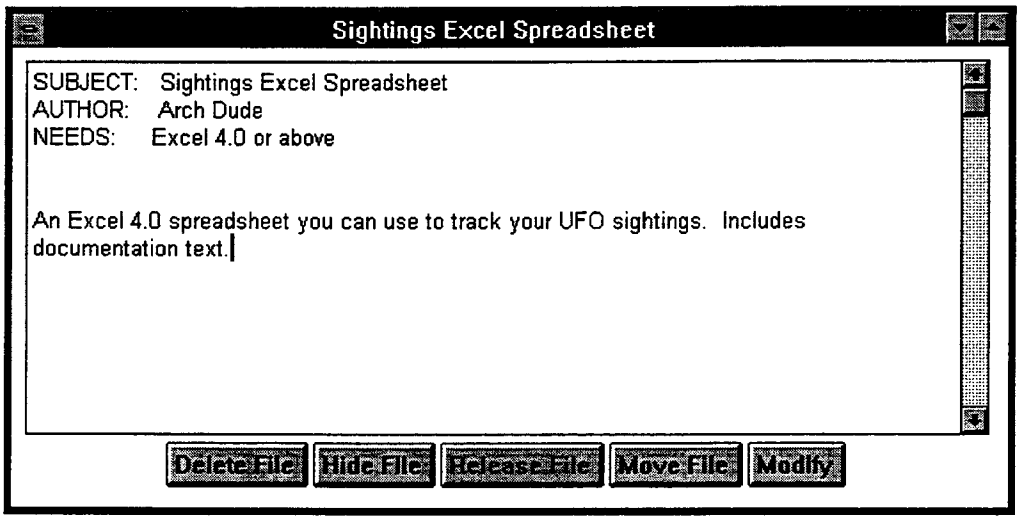

Figure 4.24 – Sample Edit File Screen

Move File 3. Click on Move File.

The Move File Dialog appears:

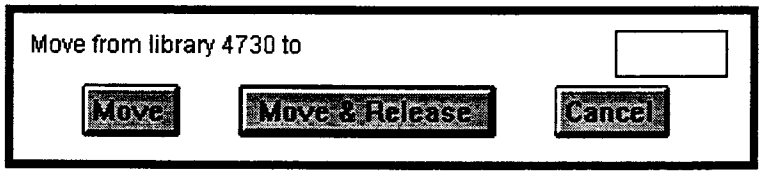

Figure 4.25 – Move File Dialog

Move from library <number> to _____ 4. Type the ID number of the library where you want to move the file. (<number> in the message is the ID number of your library.)

Move 5. Click on Move to move the file to the library you entered in Step 4. The file is moved to the library's Hidden Files Area, and must be released before members can see it.

- or -

Move & Release Click on Move & Release to move the file and immediately release it for members to see.

Caution: Do not use this function without the prior consent of the sysop who manages the destination library.

- or -

Cancel Click on Cancel to exit the dialog.

If you click on Cancel, the Edit File Screen reappears.

If you click on Move or Move and Release, the appropriate confirmation message appears:

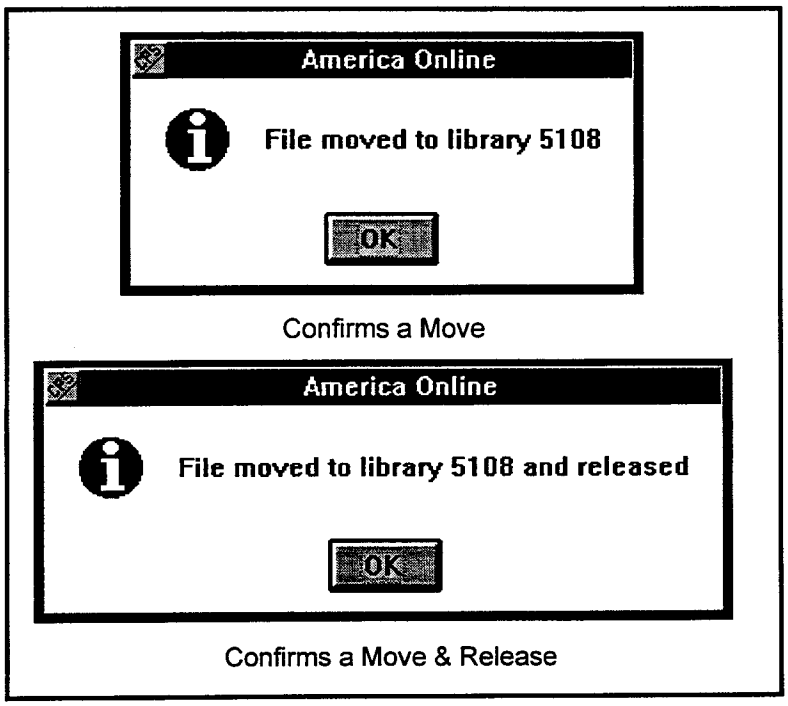

Figure 4.26 – Move Confirmation Messages

OK 6. Click on OK to remove the confirmation message.

The Main Screen or the Hidden Files Screen reappears.

Note: Neither the Main Screen nor the Hidden Files Screen is automatically updated to reflect the file move. You must close the screen and then reopen it to see a new, accurate display.

Software Library Management Issues

This section discusses the major issues in managing America Online software libraries. It is not specific to any particular area or provider, and is intended to provide general guidelines as a basis for discussion with your producer.

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In addition to this manual, you can find several excellent articles on library management in the America Online Resource Center, a private area on America Online. To gain access to this area, contact your America Online producer. Figure 4.27 shows the main screen of the Resource Center:

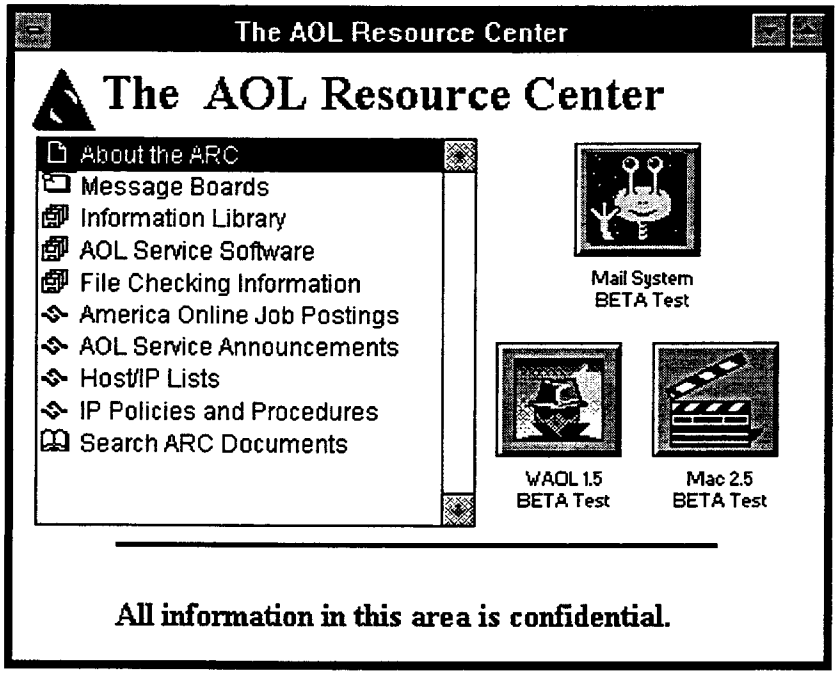

Figure 4.27 – America Online Resource Center (July, 1994)

The Resource Center is updated regularly with new information and features. Also, America Online producers run regular "boot camps," or online live training sessions for new sysops. To find out about the next scheduled boot camp, contact your America Online producer.

When to Release Files

Try whenever possible to release files in a timely manner, ideally twenty-four to forty-eight hours after uploading when possible. Members usually expect to see their uploads released in a day or two, and will often send letters if they feel a sysop is tardy in posting their files. Shareware authors earn income from their programs, and members who post freeware take pride in sharing with the online community.

In popular forums, releasing files in one or two days is an unrealistic goal, even with several sysops. The largest forums can receive hundreds of uploads in a week, all requiring testing. If you are unable to process files in a day or two, the best alternative is to post a text file stating how long members can expect to wait for their files to be released. Most members have no problem

waiting a week or more for their files to be cleared if they know in advance about the lag time.

File Descriptions

The file description is the only way a member can determine if the file is worth downloading. File descriptions should always be informative; they should also be cleanly written, with no misspellings or grammatical errors. A haphazardly written description that contains little useful information reflects badly on the forum where it is posted.

The following section contains general guidelines on writing good file descriptions.

Contents

A file description should always tell the member what the file is, what it does, and what it requires to be used. Those three rules imply a fourth one: know who your audience is. The description "VBX code that creates a slider-style control; requires BWCC.DLL" may be enough for a Windows programmer, but it says little to a novice user.

The more specific your audience, the more you can comfortably leave out of a file description. If your forum appeals to a wide range of interests and backgrounds, however, your description needs to say enough so that novice members know exactly what the file is and how they use it once they sign off.

You also do not want to say too much in a file description. Members will not read more than a page or two online, since they are paying for their connect time. Also, many uploaders make the mistake of including complete documentation in the file description but none in the actual file. Since members usually sign off before they use the file, they wind up with no documentation when they actually need it.

If you feel a description is too long, contains documentation that belongs with the file, or is not even informative enough for you to supply the additional information, contact the member who uploaded it. Most members are pleased to re-edit a file description if you tell them what they need to include (and if you explain it diplomatically).

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Consistency

Given the wide variety of files and the different types of computers that can access America Online, it is impossible to set service-wide standards for file description formats. We do recommend and encourage you to develop standards for your forum. If your file descriptions are consistently written, with the same information always presented in the same order, your library looks professional and is easier for members to use.

We also encourage you to develop boilerplates, or stock phrases to use in similar situations. For example, America Online's download time averages are much higher than what most members actually experience with graphics files. You could add a boilerplate statement to every graphics file in your forum stating this, such as, "Despite the indicated download time, graphics often download much faster."

Boilerplates give an extra air of consistency, further enhancing the professional appearance of your library. They can also save you a lot of work. If you keep the boilerplates in a text file on your hard disk, you can paste them into file descriptions instead of typing them.

Cross-Referencing

Many times, the member reading the file description is new to the service, or even a novice computer user. Even experienced members are not familiar with every forum on America Online; a three-year DOS member who buys a new Macintosh will be as ignorant of the many Macintosh forums as a new member.

To help members get the most out of their files, always include cross-references to other related programs, particularly if they are in other libraries or other forums. For example, the JPEG graphics format is still new to most computer users, and many popular programs still cannot use it at this writing. If you want to post a JPEG file in your library, you should mention in what forum or library members can find a program that can display it, in case they don't have one.

Member Comments

Members often add additional comments to their file descriptions, such as their opinion of the file, or (if the member is the author) other files they have uploaded. While no one will object to your correcting their spelling errors, changing the information too much could offend the member. On the other

hand, you should not give members free rein to say whatever they feel. In these situations, your vision of your forum – what you want members to see when they use it – is often your best guide.

One example of this kind of situation is shown in the file description below (taken from the section "Modifying File Descriptions" on page 4-20):

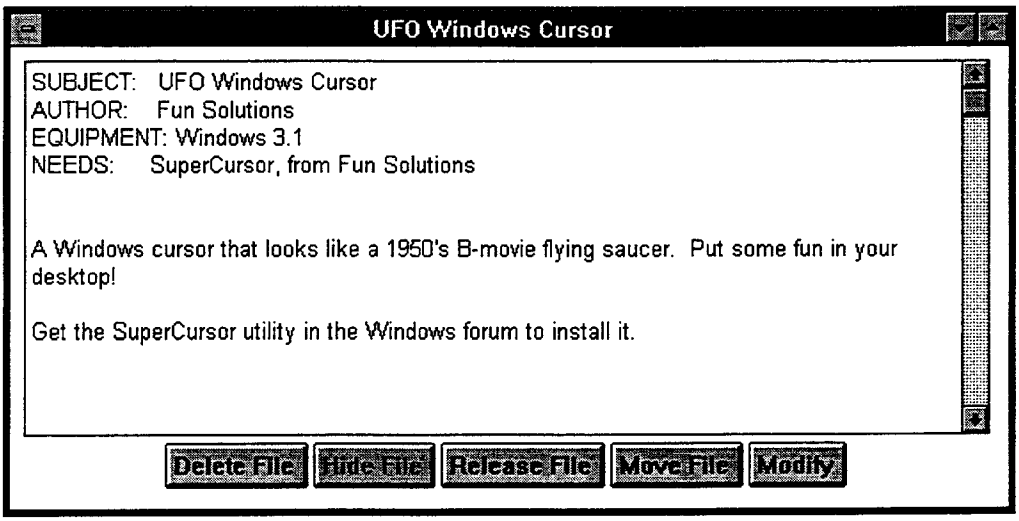
UFO Windows Cursor
SUBJECT: UFO Windows Cursor
AUTHOR: Fun Solutions
EQUIPMENT: Windows 3.1
NEEDS: SuperCursor, from Fun Solutions
A Windows cursor that looks like a 1950's B-movie flying saucer. Put some fun in your desktop!
Get the SuperCursor utility in the Windows forum to install it.
Delete File
Hide File
Release File
Move File
Modify

Figure 4.28 – Sample Original File Description

The author of this file is sending it as a promotion to solicit interest in another file, a utility he wrote. This is of course perfectly acceptable, but there are many other utilities that perform the same basic function online. Members are not required to use this particular utility. A good compromise is shown in the edited example in Figure 4.29:

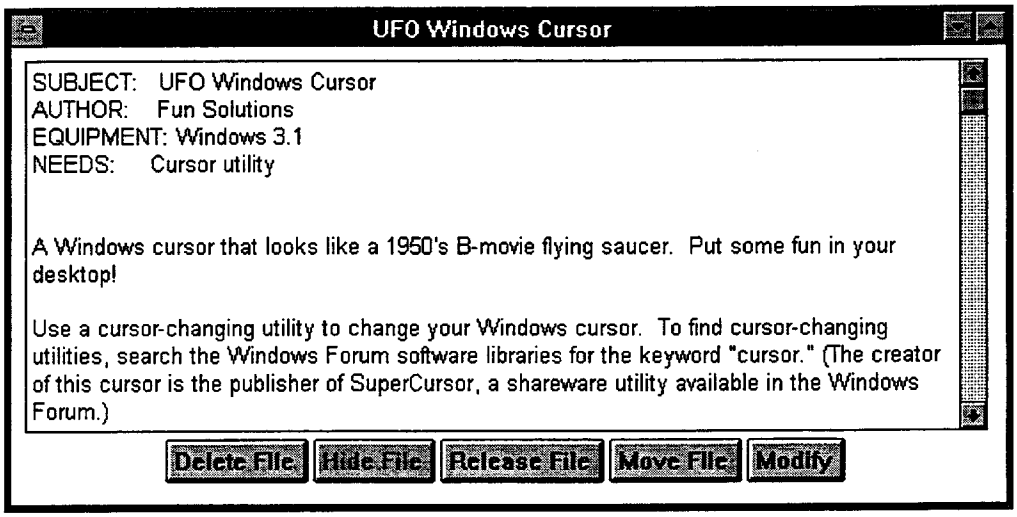
UFO Windows Cursor
SUBJECT: UFO Windows Cursor
AUTHOR: Fun Solutions
EQUIPMENT: Windows 3.1
NEEDS: Cursor utility
A Windows cursor that looks like a 1950's B-movie flying saucer. Put some fun in your desktop!
Use a cursor-changing utility to change your Windows cursor. To find cursor-changing utilities, search the Windows Forum software libraries for the keyword "cursor." (The creator of this cursor is the publisher of SuperCursor, a shareware utility available in the Windows Forum.)
Delete File
Hide File
Release File
Move File
Modify

Figure 4.29 – Example of an Edited Description

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By editing the file description, you can let the author advertise his product without misleading other members.

Virus Checking

America Online requires that you check every file posted to your software library for viruses. (This includes OS/2® files, even though at this writing there are no known OS/2 viruses.) America Online does not recommend any particular brand of virus checking software, though many forums have their own requirements.

America Online works closely with McAfee Associates, the developers of the popular shareware virus-checker VIRUSCAN™, to develop vaccines for any previously-unknown viruses found on America Online. McAfee Associates products are available for DOS and Windows at keyword "MCAFEE."

Before you release a file, be certain you are satisfied it is virus-free. However, since no virus checker is all-encompassing, you should never guarantee that a file is virus-free in any text in your forum. Simply state that you have checked the file, or include a text file in your forum stating that you check all files.

If a member reports the possibility of a virus in a file you have already released, you must immediately hide it and recheck it, if possible with more than one program. You must do this even if you can see that the file has not changed in size since you uploaded it. The risk to your forum's and America Online's reputation if a virus is released far outweighs the minor inconvenience of re-checking a file.

If you recheck a file thoroughly and find that there was nothing wrong with it, you may re-release it. We recommend you contact the member who reported the problem and let him or her know what action you took. Otherwise, the member will think you did nothing, and will tell other people that you did nothing to stop a virus.

Sometimes, a member's virus report really indicates a failure of equipment or a simple misunderstanding about how to use the file. If you can make an educated guess from the member's report as to the real nature of the problem, offer your suggestion.

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Functionality Checking

You should also check program files for functionality – in other words, make sure they work. Unlike virus checking, functionality checking is not an America Online requirement, though many forums require their sysops to do it. Nonetheless, it reflects badly on the forum to distribute files that do not work.

If you are unable to check a file for functionality – for example, you do not have the proper hardware to use a video program – state that you have not checked the file for functionality in the file description.

Copyright and Terms of Service Violations

If a file you receive in your library violates the Terms of Service, you must immediately delete the file. After you have deleted the offending file, you must e-mail the member to tell him or her that you have removed the file for Terms of Service violations. You must also report the incident to Terms of Service Staff. For a complete discussion of reporting violations, see "Reporting Violations" in Chapter 2.

The exception to this rule is pornographic uploads. You must move all pornographic uploads directly to your America Online producer's private library as soon as you receive them. If you do not know the number of your producer's private library, contact your America Online producer.

Library Size Limits

When a software library gets too large, members can begin to experience delays and problems. The practical upper limit for a software library is 300 files, but we recommend you consider dividing your files into multiple libraries when your library reaches 175 files.

Multiple libraries let you subdivide the contents of your library, making it faster and easier for members to browse through the files. For more information, see "Multiple Libraries."

Multiple Libraries

Your America Online producer can help you determine how best to change your library from one file to several. If the growth in your single library far

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exceeded your expectations, you will probably want to create multiple libraries now, rather than incrementally expanding and moving files on a regular basis.

If your area encompasses several libraries, we recommend creating a special uploads-only library, and turning off uploading on all the other ones. This lets you go to just one location to get new uploads. Once you have tested the file and edited the description, you can then move it from the upload library to the appropriate download library. For more information or assistance, contact your America Online producer.

Cross-Platform Files

Increasingly, Macintosh and MS-DOS computers are able to use each other's data files. Many commercial programs that run on both platforms create the same types of files. The differences between the two platforms can still cause minor inconveniences when using files from one platform on another machine.

If you run a forum where members using both kinds of computers upload and download files, make sure your files are cross-platform "friendly." Examples of areas where you need to watch for differences include:

- Compression formats — Each platform has its own compression formats. The America Online software for one platform does not know the other platform's compression format, and cannot decompress its files automatically. Macintosh users cannot use .ZIP files; MS-DOS users must use an additional utility to unstuff .SIT files. For these reasons, either post cross-platform files uncompressed, or if they are too large, upload a version for each type of computer.

- Self-extracting files — Self-extracting files are compressed files with built-in decompression programs. No self-extraction method works across platforms. Post self-extracting files uncompressed, or upload a version for each type of computer.

- Filenames — MS-DOS filenames are more restrictive than Macintosh filenames. The America Online software can make a Macintosh name conform to DOS filename standards, but the names it chooses may not be suitable. TIFF files, for example, work on both computers. MS-DOS graphics programs, however, expect TIFF files to end in the extension .TIF, which the America Online software cannot do. Since Macintosh

computers can use any DOS filename, we recommend using appropriate DOS filenames with extensions for all cross-platform uploads.

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CHAPTER 5

Working with Clubs

What is a Club?

A club – also known as a private area – is a place online where only members you designate can enter. For example, if you are running a beta (pre-release) test of new software, you can place a message board for your testers inside a club. Since only testers will be able to enter the club, members with regular support questions will not accidentally use the wrong board.

Another example of a club is America Online's own Resource Center area, described in Chapter 4. Since it contains information that we do not release to members and previews of new online software, we place the Resource Center in a club so that non-sysops cannot accidentally enter it.

You can add various online areas to your club, including software libraries, message boards, and conference rooms. The one area you cannot add is a People Connection chat room, since they are all part of the single People Connection area.

A club can have up to 15 different levels, or statuses. Each status has its own list, and each can go to a different area. This lets you further refine the access, sending some members to one area (for example, a menu with several options), and other members to another area (for example, a similar menu with fewer options).

How Do I Get a Club?

Your America Online producer will create the club for you. You work with your producer to determine how you want to structure your club, and who the members and sysops should be.

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After your producer creates the club, you can add members to a club status or delete members from it using the online **Club Management Tool**. You cannot designate other sysops, however.

You do not need to be a member of the club status to manage it, so one sysop can control the membership for every status in the club.

Using the Club Management Tool

You use the online **Club Management Tool** to add members to a status in a club, or delete members from a status in a club. You can also list all the current members of the club for your own reference. The **Club Management Tool** works only on the Macintosh and the PC Geos platforms. You cannot manage a club from the Windows platform.

To use the online Club Management Tool, perform the following steps:

1. Press ⌘-K (Macintosh) or CTRL-K (PC Geos).

   - or -

   Select Keyword from the Go To menu.

   The Go to Keyword Screen appears:

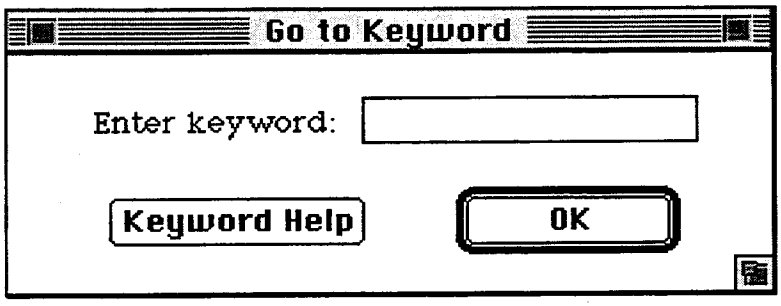

Figure 5.1 – Go to Keyword Screen

2. Type

   manage clubs

3. Press RETURN.

   The **Club Management** Main Screen appears, with a list of every club status that you own:

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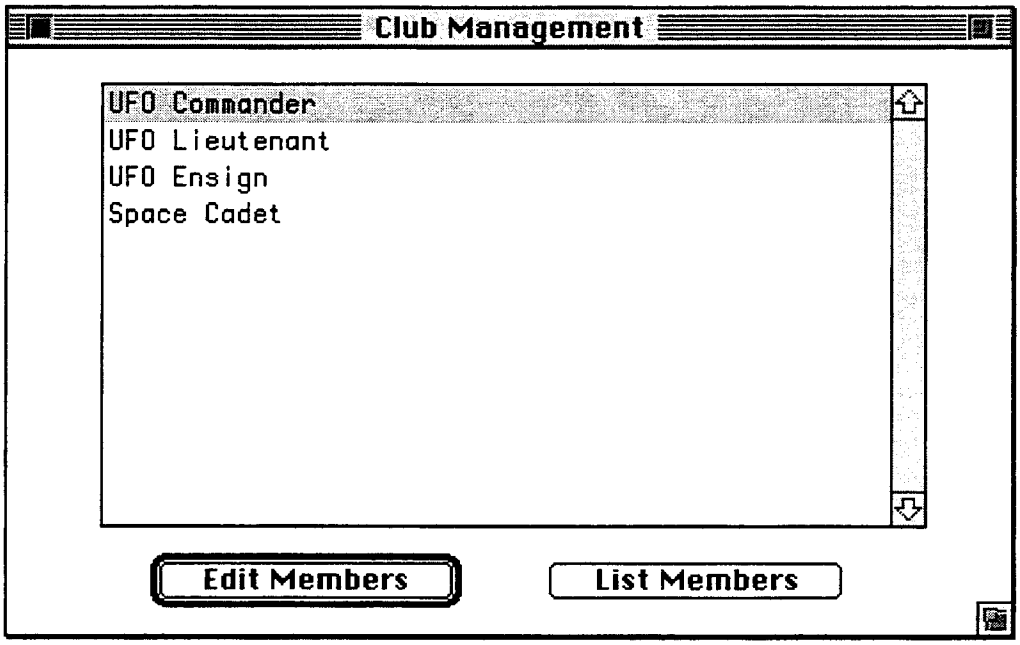

Figure 5.2 – **Club Management Tool** Main Screen with Sample Clubs

Edit Members — Click on Edit Members to add or delete members from a club status you own. See "Adding a Member to a Club" on page 5-3, and "Deleting a Member from a Club" on page 5-5.

List Members — Click on List Members to list the members who currently belong to a club status you own. See "Listing the Members of a Club Status" on page 5-7.

4. Click on the close box in the upper left corner of the screen to exit the Main Screen.

Adding a Member to a Club

You can add members to a club status you own using the **Club Management Tool** without the assistance of America Online staff. You cannot make a member a sysop with the **Club Management Tool**. To make a member a sysop, contact your America Online producer.

When you add a member to a status, all of the screen names on the member's account have access to the club status. If you only want to give one of the member's screen names access, your America Online producer will have to add the single screen name through a different method. Contact your America Online producer for assistance.

To add a member to a club status, perform the following steps from the **Club Management Tool** Main Screen:

1. Highlight the status where you want to add a member by clicking on it once.

2. Click on Edit Members.

   The Add/Delete Window appears:

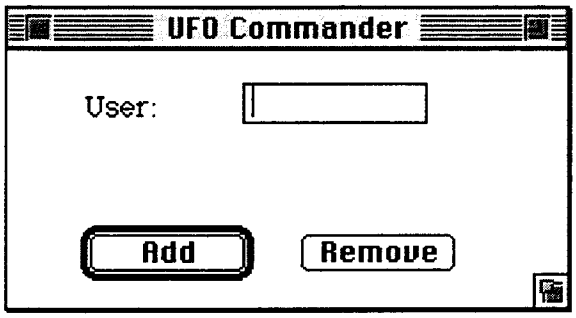

Figure 5.3 – Add/Delete Window

2. Type the screen name of the member you want to add to this status.

   When you add a member with the **Club Management Tool**, every screen name in that member's account becomes a member of that status. To only add a single screen name to a club status, your America Online producer must add the member.

Add

3. Click on Add to add the member to the club status.

   A confirmation message appears:

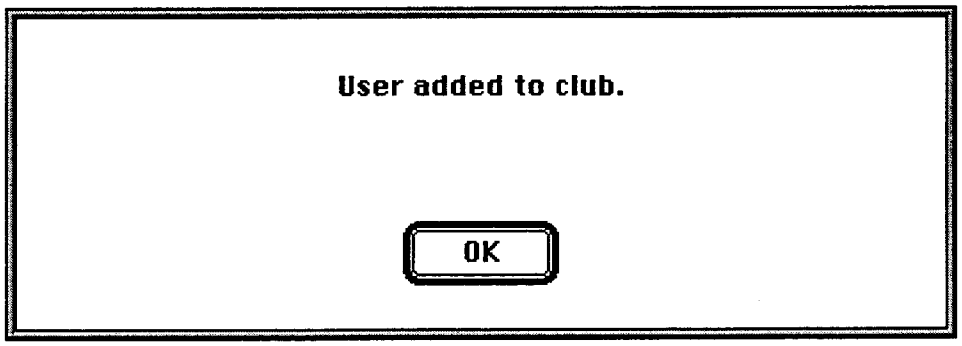

Figure 5.4 – Add Confirmation Message

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Note: If the member already belongs to a different status in the club, you must delete the member from the old status before you can add the member to this status. If you do not delete the member from the old status, an error message appears, as shown in Figure 5.5:

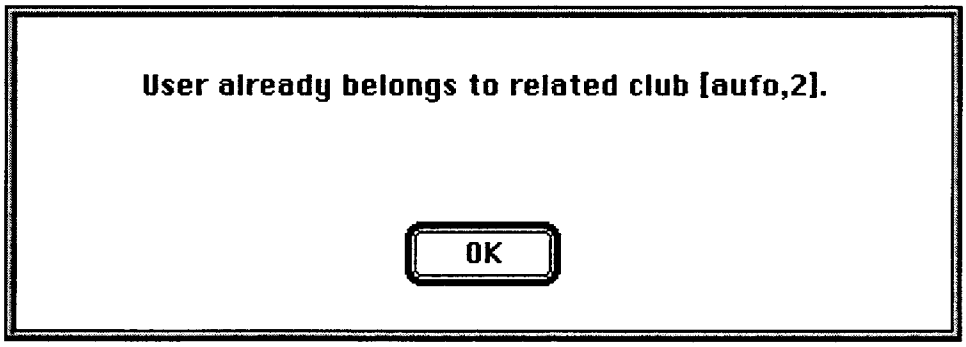

Figure 5.5 – Add Error Message

OK

4. Click on OK to clear the Confirmation Message.

   If you receive the error message, click on OK to clear it. See "Deleting a Member from a Club" for instructions on deleting a member from a club status.

   The Add/Delete Window reappears.

5. Click on the close box in the upper left corner to close the Add/Delete Window.

   The Main Screen reappears.

Deleting a Member from a Club

You can delete members from a club status you own using the **Club Management Tool** without the assistance of America Online staff.

To delete a member from a club, perform the following steps from the **Club Management Tool** Main Screen:

1. Highlight the status where you want to delete a member by clicking on it once.

2. Click on Edit Members.

The Add/Delete Window appears:

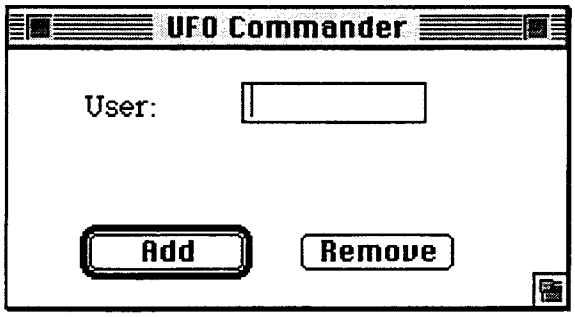

Figure 5.6 – Add/Delete Window

2. Type the screen name of the member you want to delete from this status.

Delete

3. Click on Delete to delete the member from the club status.

   A confirmation message appears:

Figure 5.7 – Delete Confirmation Message

OK

4. Click on OK to clear the Confirmation Message.

   The Add/Delete Window reappears.

5. Click on the close box in the upper left corner to close the Add/Delete Window.

   The Main Screen reappears.

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Listing the Members of a Club Status

You can list the screen names of current members in a status you own using the **Club Management Tool**.

To list the members of a club, perform the following steps from the **Club Management Tool** Main Screen:

1. Highlight the status where you want to list the member by clicking on it once.

2. Click on List Members.

   The Members List appears:

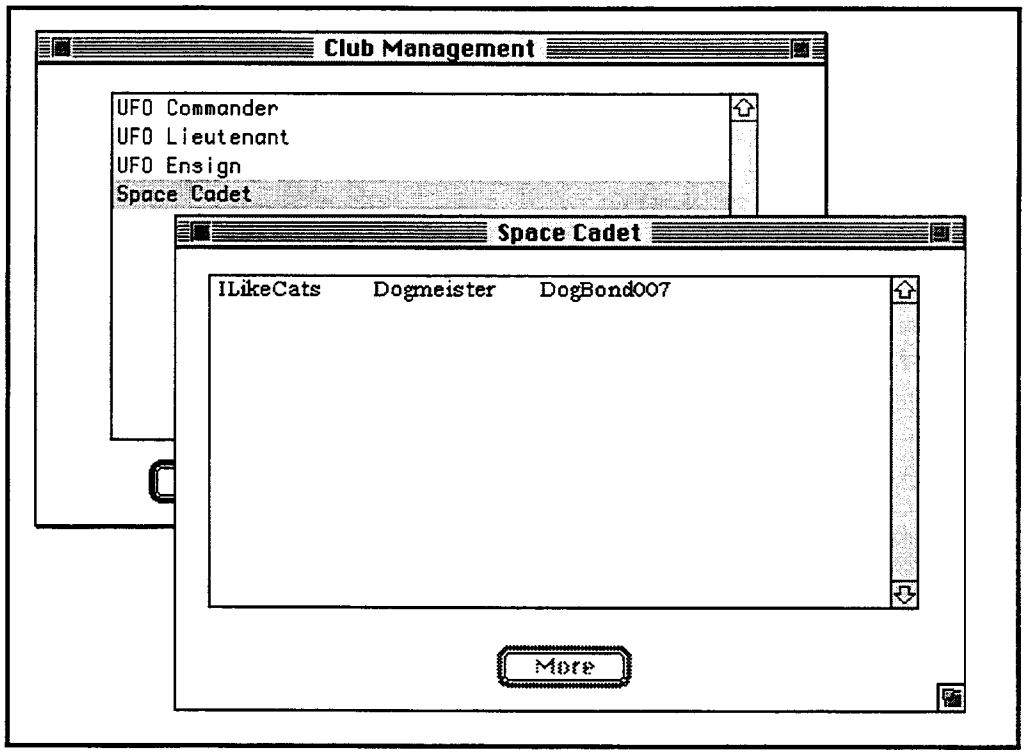

Figure 5.8 – Sample Members List

   You cannot perform any actions from the Members List.

3. Click on the close box in the upper left corner of the window to exit the list.

   The Main Screen reappears.

CHAPTER 6
Working with Auditoriums

America Online has several auditoriums, or online areas where up to 500 members can come to "hear" a guest speaker. The audience members cannot directly address the guest speaker. Instead, audience members send messages to the guest speaker. Special staff members, known as "emcees," review the questions. The emcees then pass on appropriate questions to the guest. Figure 6.1 shows a sample auditorium screen:

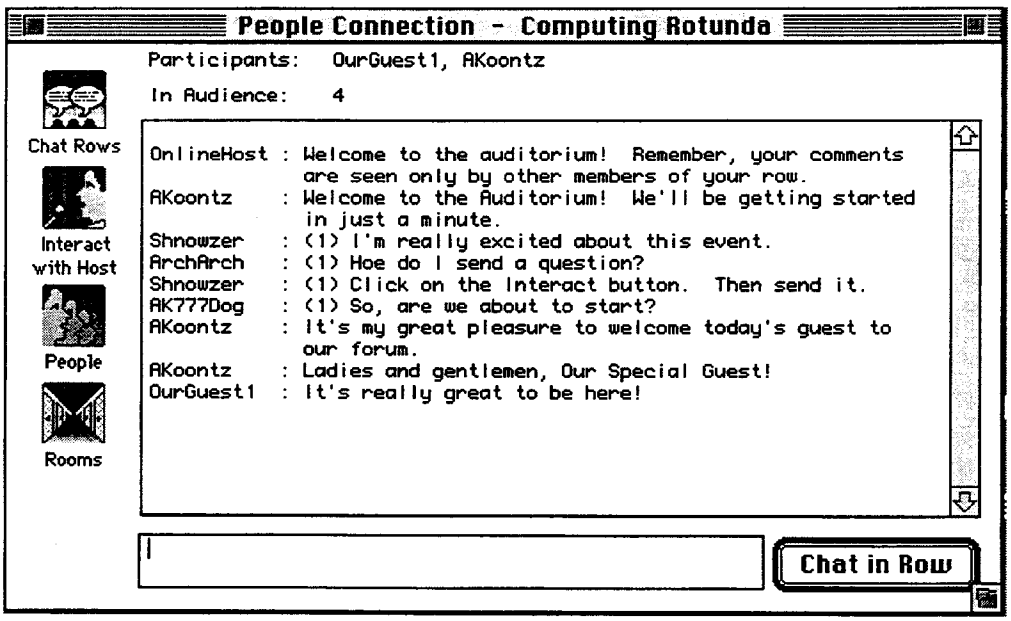
People Connection - Computing Rotunda
Participants: OurGuest1, AKoontz
In Audience: 4
Chat Rows
Interact with Host
People
Rooms
OnlineHost : Welcome to the auditorium! Remember, your comments are seen only by other members of your row.
AKoontz : Welcome to the Auditorium! We'll be getting started in just a minute.
Shnowzer : (1) I'm really excited about this event.
ArchArch : (1) Hoe do I send a question?
Shnowzer : (1) Click on the Interact button. Then send it.
AK777Dog : (1) So, are we about to start?
AKoontz : It's my great pleasure to welcome today's guest to our forum.
AKoontz : Ladies and gentlemen, Our Special Guest!
OurGuest1 : It's really great to be here!
Chat in Row

Figure 6.1 – Auditorium Online

People on the stage can converse among themselves without the audience seeing their conversation, using special commands. Audience members can also talk among themselves privately, in groups of up to eight members, much like in private chat rooms. These groups are called rows.

America Online staff often run events for information providers, but providers who hold frequent or regular events run the events themselves. This chapter describes the basic commands for running an auditorium event, and contains a

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complete command reference at the end of the chapter. Running an auditorium is a complicated procedure, and you will need practice and assistance from America Online staff before you can do it smoothly. Contact your America Online producer for more information.

Auditorium Event Scheduling

Most information providers contact their America Online producer to set up an auditorium event. Information providers who hold events frequently may work with a remote staff assistant in addition to an America Online producer to schedule their events.

Whether you work through a producer or through a remote assistant, the procedure for requesting an event is straightforward. You tell your America Online contact when you want to schedule the event and who is appearing. America Online staff will make sure that the auditorium is available; if it isn't, you work with them to schedule an alternative time.

After you schedule the event, America Online staff will give you information about how to access the auditorium and how to access the stage, the restricted area of the auditorium from which emcees control the event.

Text for Broadcasting during an Event

Once you schedule an event, you must prepare any text that you want to broadcast during the event. For example, you may want to introduce your guest with several paragraphs of text. Rather than typing the text line by line at the beginning of the event, you prepare the text in advance and give it to your America Online contact, who will store it on the system.

Once the text is on the system, you can broadcast the entire introduction with a single command. If your introduction is more than one screen in length, it will be stored as separate files that you broadcast in sequence, so that members have time to read each page.

For more information on broadcasting prepared text, see "Broadcasting Text Files" on page 6-14.

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Screen Names for Guest Speakers

Many times, guest speakers are not America Online members. If your guest is not a member (or if the guest does not want to use his or her real screen name in a public forum), contact your America Online producer or remote staff assistant to create a screen name for your guest to use.

Event Promotions

Since auditorium events are big draws, they are usually promoted online two or three days prior to the event so that many members know about it. Contact your America Online producer to set up a promotion.

Affinity group information providers can set up their own promotions. See Chapter 7, "Creating Sign-On Promotions," for more information.

Running an Auditorium Event

An auditorium can hold up to 500 people. Guest speakers cannot handle the potential number of questions alone, even with technical training. Moreover, there are many questions you do not want the whole audience to see, for reasons ranging from profanity to simple repetition.

The guest, therefore, is always assisted by emcees. The emcees manage the questions coming in from the audience. They also control the audience's ability to send messages to the stage and to chat with each other.

The following sections introduce the basic functions of an emcee and how the emcee uses auditorium commands to control an auditorium event. The instructions assume that you are the emcee of your auditorium event. For a complete list of auditorium commands, see "Auditorium Commands" on page 6-15.

Emcees

The audience enters the auditorium through a doorway. To the member, a doorway is simply a button or icon that leads to the auditorium, the same method that members get around most of America Online. In order to run the auditorium session, you enter the stage through a hidden "master" doorway that the audience cannot access. You receive all your special abilities as an

emcee simply by entering the master doorway; no special setting to your account is required.

Your main function as an emcee is to manage the queues of text messages sent by members to the stage. You read the queues and select appropriate comments or questions to broadcast, or display on-screen for the speaker to answer. Emcees are the only members who can use the auditorium commands.

Using auditorium commands, you can also invite speakers to the stage, send prepared introductions to the audience, monitor the audience members, let them chat among themselves, and gag any member who is making inappropriate comments.

Sending Auditorium Commands

As the emcee of your event, you can send auditorium commands to perform any auditorium function. You send the commands by typing them in the write line, the long, narrow field at the bottom of the Auditorium Master Window. The host system process that runs the auditorium performs the command instead of displaying it on-screen as text. Figures 6.2 and 6.3 show Auditorium Master Windows online:

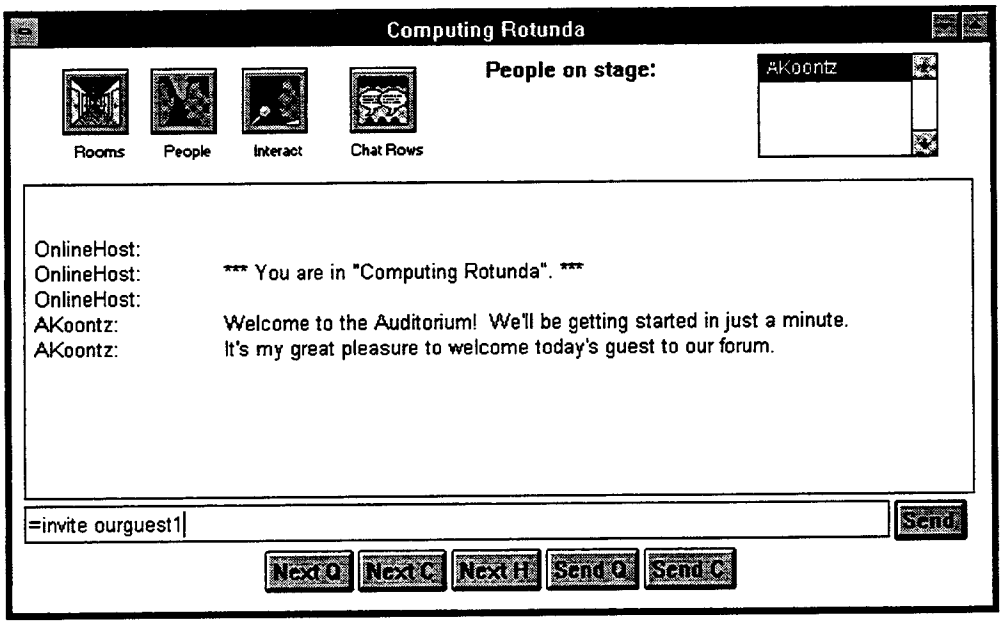

Figure 6.2 – Auditorium Master Window (Windows platform)

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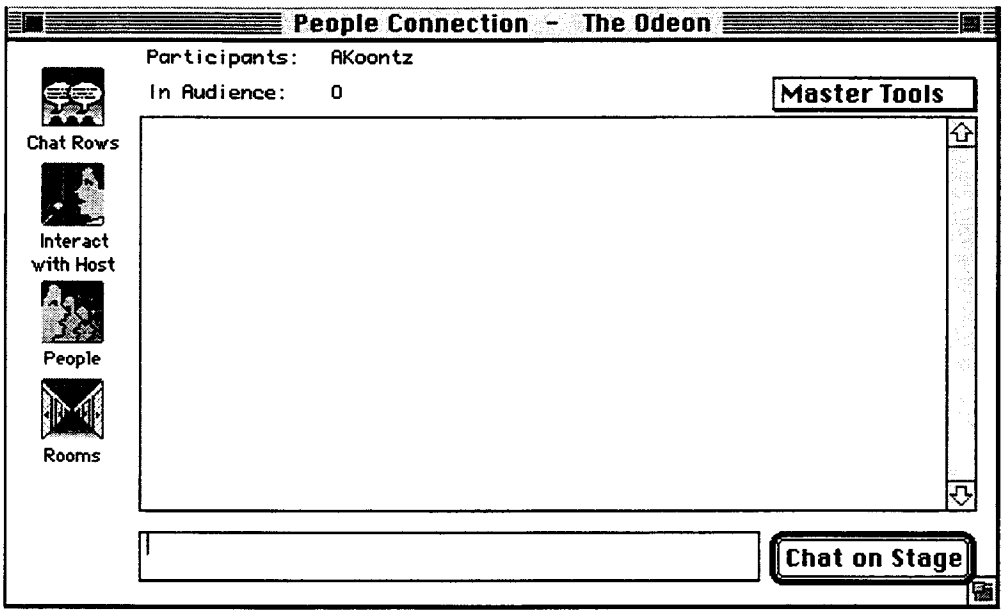

Figure 6.3 – Auditorium Master Window (Macintosh platform)

To send an auditorium command, perform the following steps:

1. Type

   =<COMMAND> [arguments]

   where

<COMMAND>	is the auditorium command you want to send.
[arguments]	is any information required by the command, such as a screen name, a text message, or a value.

   All auditorium commands must begin with an equal sign (=). If you forget to type the equal sign for the first character, the command you type appears on-screen. For a complete list and description of auditorium commands including their arguments, see page 6-15.

2. Press ENTER.

   You can also click on the button next to the write line ("Send" on Windows, "Chat on Stage" on Macintosh). The command you typed is performed.

Master Functions

On the Windows and Macintosh platforms, commands that are commonly used by emcees are placed on the Auditorium Master Window. On the Windows platform, they are buttons at the bottom of the window (see Figure 6.2). On the Macintosh platform, they are entries under a menu labeled Master Tools at the top right corner of the window (see Figure 6.3).

These master functions duplicate the commands to display the next items in your queues and broadcast them to the audience for the guest to answer.

Most emcees find that it is faster to type the command instead of using the mouse to select a master function. Where applicable, the instructions note that you can use a master function.

Communicating Onstage

Emcees and guest speakers on the stage can send private comments to each other. People in the audience cannot use these functions, and people onstage cannot use them to send private messages to the audience.

To communicate privately with others onstage, perform the following steps:

1. Type

   $

   followed by your comment, to let all event participants onstage see the comment. The audience does not see $-comments.

   - or -

   Type

   &

   followed by your comment, to let only emcees see the comment. Guest speakers on the stage do not see &-comments.

2. Press ENTER.

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You can also click on the button next to the write line ("Send" on Windows, "Chat on Stage" on Macintosh).

Inviting a Guest Speaker Onstage

Guest speakers almost never enter the stage through the master doorway. Most guests are not trained in auditorium use, and often are not adept with computers. Instead, the guest enters the audience, and the emcee invites the guest to the stage with the =INVITE command. This lets the guest talk to the audience, but does not give the guest access to auditorium commands.

In most events, you only invite the scheduled guest speakers onstage. Occasionally, of course, you may invite a member of the audience onstage, just as live shows sometimes do.

When inviting guests onstage, it is a good idea to use the =MIKES command to hide the guest's comments until the guest gets his or her bearings and is ready to participate.

To invite a guest onstage, perform the following steps:

1. Type

   =INVITE <screenname>

   where

   <screenname> is the screen name the guest speaker is using.

2. Press ENTER.

   You can also click on the button next to the write line ("Send" on Windows, "Chat on Stage" on Macintosh).

   A message appears to the guest inviting him or her to go on stage. If the guest clicks on "Yes," the guest's messages become visible to the whole audience, unless they are prefaced by a dollar sign.

3. Type

   =MIKES <screenname> -OFF

where

<screenname> is the screen name the guest speaker is using.

This is an optional step. You do this to prevent the guest speaker from sending an inadvertent message before the guest gets used to the onstage commands and procedures. If a staff member or remote staff assistant is typing on the guest speaker's behalf, you do not need to perform this step.

4. Press ENTER.

   You can also click on the button next to the write line ("Send" on Windows, "Chat on Stage" on Macintosh).

5. Type

   =MIKES <screenname> -ON

   where

   <screenname> is the screen name the guest speaker is using.

   If you turned the guest's comments off in Step 3, you must turn them on again before you send the first question to the guest. If you did not perform Step 3, you do not need to turn the guest's comments on.

6. Press ENTER.

   You can also click on the button next to the write line ("Send" on Windows, "Chat on Stage" on Macintosh).

Managing Questions and Comments

Members send questions and comments to the stage by composing them in the Interact Window, which appears when they click on the Interact button on the Auditorium Window. Figure 6.4 shows the Interact Window:

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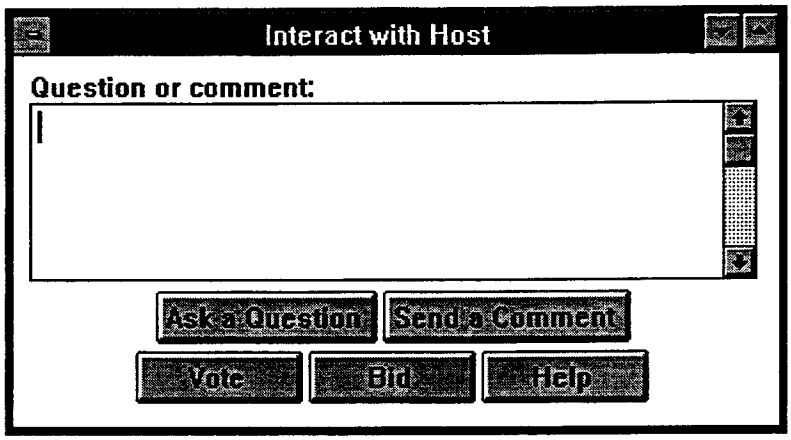

Figure 6.4 – Interact Window (Windows platform)

Questions and comments sent by audience members to the stage are stored in queues. There are three queues:

Main Question Queue	Contains text questions composed by audience members. To send a question to the main question queue, the member clicks on the "Send a Question" button on the Interact Window.
Main Comment Queue	Contains text comments composed by audience members. To send a comment to the main comment queue, the member clicks on the "Send a Comment" button on the Interact Window.
Emcee Queue	Contains questions and comments each emcee selects from the other queues, and additional messages sent by other emcees. Each emcee has his or her own queue. Emcees automatically get a queue when they enter through the master doorway.

During the auditorium session, emcees review the contents of the queues to determine if they are suitable. If a message is suitable, the emcees broadcast the message to the stage and the audience, so that the speaker can answer it. A common arrangement in sessions with high volume is to have two emcees dividing the work. One emcee filters the queues and sends appropriate messages to the other emcee's queue. The other emcee broadcasts the messages from the filtered queue, and provides other support to the speaker as necessary.

Reviewing Question and Comment Queues

In a typical session, the emcee reviews the main question and the main comment queues, and either stores, deletes, or sends the comments.

To review the question and comment queues, perform the following steps:

1. Type

   =NEXTQ

   to see the next question in the main question queue

   - or -

   =NEXTC

   to see the next comment in the main comment queue.

   Instead of typing commands, you can use the master functions to review the queues. If you use the master functions, skip to Step 3.

2. Press ENTER.

   You can also click on the button next to the write line ("Send" on Windows, "Chat on Stage" on Macintosh). The command you typed is performed.

   The comment or question appears.

3. Type

   =BQ

   to broadcast this question. If you use =BQ, the question appears with the word "Question:" preceding it.

   - or -

   =BC

   to broadcast this comment. If you use =BC, the comment appears with the word "Comment:" preceding it.

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- or -

=DEL

to delete this question or comment.

- or -

=SEND <emcee-name>

where

<emcee-name>	is the screen name of the emcee you want to send this question or comment to.

- or -

Repeat Steps 1 and 2. If you ignore the comment or question, it is stored in your private queue.

4. Press ENTER.

   You can also click on the button next to the write line ("Send" on Windows, "Chat on Stage" on Macintosh).

Audience Controls

As an emcee, you are also responsible for controlling the audience in the auditorium. When members enter an auditorium, they are divided automatically into rows, much like rows in a real auditorium.

Rows are miniature chat rooms that accommodate a preset number of people. Like chat rooms, there are no place-holding functions; if a member leaves the auditorium and the row fills up, the member goes to a new row when he or she returns. Assignment to rows depends solely on when members enter the auditorium. You cannot move members from one row to another.

To control the audience, you can let members chat among themselves, you can broadcast the conversations in a particular row, or you can gag an obnoxious member. These functions are described in the following sections.

Turning Member Chatting Off

Initially, members can chat in their rows when they enter an auditorium. You may want to turn chatting off, for example, if you are running an event that involves audience participation, such as a game or an auction.

To turn chatting off, perform the following steps:

1. Type

   =CHAT OFF

   to turn chatting off for all rows.

   - or -

   =CHAT -row OFF

   where

row	is the number of the row where you want to turn chatting off.

2. Press ENTER.

   You can also click on the button next to the write line ("Send" on Windows, "Chat on Stage" on Macintosh).

Turning Member Chatting On

To turn chatting back on after you have turned it off, perform the following steps:

1. Type

   =CHAT ON

   to turn chatting on for all rows.

   - or -

   =CHAT -row ON

   where

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row	is the number of the row where you want to turn chatting on.

2. Press ENTER.

   You can also click on the button next to the write line ("Send" on Windows, "Chat on Stage" on Macintosh).

Making a Row Loud

Making a row loud means making that row's conversations visible to the rest of the audience. Conversations in a row are, by default, only visible to the members of that row. You make a row loud, for example, if your auditorium event is a game that requires audience participation.

To make a row loud, perform the following steps:

1. Type

   =LOUD <-row>

   where

row	is the number of the row you want to make visible to the rest of the audience.

2. Press ENTER.

   You can also click on the button next to the write line ("Send" on Windows, "Chat on Stage" on Macintosh).

   The conversations of the row you selected are broadcast to the whole auditorium. If another row was loud, it stops being loud. Only one row can be loud at a time.

Turning a Loud Row Off

To turn a loud row off, perform the following steps:

1. Type

   =LOUD -OFF

2. Press ENTER.

   You can also click on the button next to the write line ("Send" on Windows, "Chat on Stage" on Macintosh).

   The row stops being loud and its conversations are no longer broadcast to the auditorium.

Gagging an Obnoxious Member

As an emcee, you cannot remove an individual member from the auditorium. If a member is making obnoxious remarks in the row, however, you can gag the member, meaning that messages from the member are no longer visible to the other members in the row. A gag only remains until the member leaves the auditorium. If the member re-enters he or she is no longer gagged.

To gag a member, perform the following steps:

1. Type

   =GAG <screenname>

   where

   <screenname> is the screen name of the member you want to gag.

2. Press ENTER.

   You can also click on the button next to the write line ("Send" on Windows, "Chat on Stage" on Macintosh).

Broadcasting Text Messages

At times, you may need to send large amounts of text to the audience. For example, you may want to introduce the speaker with a short biography or description of the speaker's accomplishments.

To send prepared text, you must give the text to your America Online producer before the event. Your producer will store the text as a file on the system, which you then broadcast for the auditorium to read.

To broadcast a text message, perform the following steps:

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1. Type

   =FILE -B <filename>

   where

   <filename> is the name of the file you want to broadcast. Your producer will give you this name after the file is stored on the system.

2. Press ENTER.

   You can also click on the button next to the write line ("Send" on Windows, "Chat on Stage" on Macintosh).

   The text of the file is sent to the auditorium in its entirety, as if you had typed it online.

   Long introductions are broken up into several files, each one screen in length. Depending on the length of your prepared text, you may have to broadcast several files in sequence. Your producer will tell you if your prepared text needs to be sent with several commands.

Auditorium Commands

This section contains an alphabetical list and description of auditorium commands. Commands and arguments are not case-sensitive, except where noted. Only emcees who enter the stage through the master doorway have access to these commands. Guest speakers invited onstage cannot use these commands. For instructions on using auditorium commands, see "Running an Auditorium Session" on page 6-3.

=ASK

Description

=ASK calls the auditorium Question Form, which lets an emcee compose a question and send it to the main question queue. Figure 6.5 shows the Question Form:

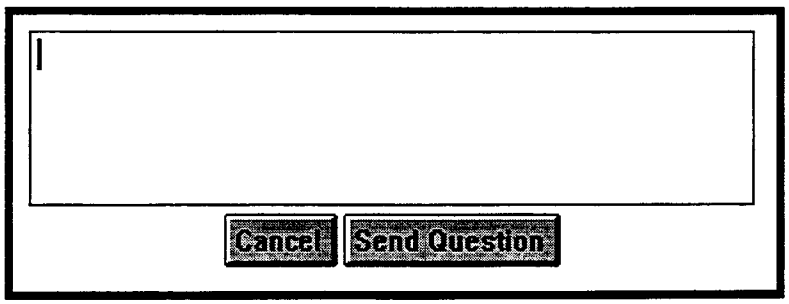

Figure 6.5 – Question Form

Normally, if an emcee writes a question and sends it from the write line, it appears to the audience with the emcee's screen name. When the emcee submits the question to the queue and then broadcasts it, it appears only with the prefix "Question:" and is therefore anonymous.

See also the =MSG command on page 6-27 for another method of sending comments or questions from the stage.

Syntax

```
=ASK
```

=BC

Description

=BC broadcasts the current text item in an emcee queue to the audience. It appears with the prefix "Comment:" and does not identify the member who sent it.

Syntax

```
=BC
```

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=BIDOFF

Description

=BIDOFF turns bidding off. For information on bidding, see the =BIDON command below.

Syntax

```
=BIDOFF
```

=BIDON

Description

=BIDON turns bidding on. Auditoriums can accept bids, letting you run electronic auctions. Once you turn bidding on, people in the audience send bids by clicking on the "Bid" button on the Interact Window.

Members must submit their bids in the format:

$<dollars>.<cents>

where

<dollars>	Specifies the number of dollars the member is bidding. To bid no dollars, members type a zero; for example, **$0.50**.
<cents>	Specifies the number of cents the member is bidding. To bid no cents, members type 00; for example, a bid of five dollars even is typed **$5.00**.

The auditorium system lets you set the minimum and maximum increases in bids. The default maximum is $10.00; the default minimum is $1.00. If the bid is over the maximum or under the minimum, the bid is not accepted and the member who sent it receives an error. For more information, see =SETMIN on page 6-33 and =SETMAX on page 6-32.

Syntax

```
=BIDON
```

=BLOCK

Description

=BLOCK blocks messages sent by members in a particular row. Emcees can block a row, for example, if the row contains several people who are sending obnoxious messages to the stage from the Interact Window.

Syntax

```
=BLOCK -<row> [-OFF]
```

<row>	Specifies the number of the row to block.
-OFF	Removes a block that an emcee previously set. Unblocking a row that is not blocked has no effect.

=BQ

Description

=BQ broadcasts the current text item in the emcee queue. It appears with the prefix "Question:" and does not identify the member who sent it.

Syntax

```
=BQ
```

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=CHAT

Description

=CHAT disables or re-enables chat for the entire audience or for a specific row.

When members enter an auditorium, they are placed in rows, or small chat rooms. In addition to seeing the messages from the stage, members can send messages to other members in their row.

For instructions, see "Turning Member Chatting Off" on page 6-12 and "Turning Member Chatting On" on page 6-12.

Syntax

```
=CHAT [-row] <-OFF | -ON>
```

row	Specifies a particular row. If no row is specified, the command affects the entire audience.
-OFF	Disables chat for a row (or the whole audience).
-ON	Re-enables chat for a disabled row (or audience). If you re-enable a row that was not disabled, the command has no effect.

=CURRENT

Description

=CURRENT displays the current text item in an emcee queue to the emcee only. =CURRENT has no broadcasting argument.

Syntax

```
=CURRENT
```

=DEL

Description

=DEL deletes the current text item in the emcee queue.

Syntax

```
=DEL
```

=DUMP

Description

=DUMP deletes all the items currently in the specified queue. It is used, for example, when a queue is filled with obnoxious messages and the emcee does not want to wade through them.

=DUMP can only dump one queue at a time. An emcee cannot dump another emcee's own queue.

Syntax

```
=DUMP <-Q | -C | -MINE>
```

-Q	Dumps the contents of the main question queue.
-C	Dumps the contents of the main comment queue.
-MINE	Dumps the contents of the emcee queue.

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=EJECT

Description

=EJECT ejects a guest speaker from the stage. You do this at the end of the auditorium event; the guest speaker returns to the audience, and from there can sign off the service. You also do this if you have invited a member of the audience onstage as part of your event.

=EJECT cannot eject other emcees (that is, people who entered the stage by the master doorway).

Syntax

```
=EJECT (<screenname> | -ALL)
```

<screenname>	Specifies the screen name of the guest speaker to eject from the stage.
-ALL	Ejects all guest speakers from the stage.

=FIFO

Description

=FIFO lets an emcee set the ordering of his or her queue to first-in-first-out (the default ordering). When the ordering is first-in-first-out, the current item in the queue (displayed by =CURRENT and other commands) is the oldest item not yet broadcast or deleted by the emcee.

After the emcee sets the ordering, the message "Your holding queue is now First-In-First-Out" appears.

The main question and main comment queues are always first-in-first-out and cannot be changed.

Syntax

```
=FIFO
```

=FILE

Description

=FILE displays a text file, either to an emcee alone or to the entire audience. This file must be stored on the system by an America Online producer before the event begins.

Emcees usually set up files for broadcasting to the audience in order to introduce the guest. Instead of typing out the whole introduction, which can be several paragraphs long, the emcee can broadcast it.

For instructions, see "Broadcasting Text Files" on page 6-14.

Syntax

```
=FILE [-B] <filename>
```

-B	Broadcasts the file for the entire audience to see (optional).
<filename>	Specifies the name of the file to display. All auditorium text files end in the extension **.t**.

Example

```
=FILE -B guest_intro.t
```

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=GAG

Description

=GAG turns chatting off for a specific member. Use =GAG to stop an obnoxious member from sending messages to other people in the row. If the member leaves and re-enters the auditorium, the member is no longer gagged.

For instructions, see "Gagging an Obnoxious Member" on page 6-14.

Syntax

```
=GAG <screenname>
```

<screenname> Specifies the screen name of the member to gag.

=GROUPSIZE

Description

=GROUPSIZE sets the number of members per row. This number must be between four and eight. The default size of an auditorium row is eight members.

If an emcee changes the group size mid-event, the existing groups maintain their size until the last member has left. All new rows have the new size.

There is no limit to the number of times emcees can set the size of a row.

Syntax

```
=GROUPSIZE <size>
```

<size> Specifies the size of the row. The value must be between 4 and 8.

=INVITE

Description

=INVITE invites a member from the audience onto the stage. If the member is not in the audience, the =INVITE command returns an error.

A member invited on the stage becomes a guest speaker, and can send and receive private messages with the other event participants.

Syntax

```
=INVITE <screenname>
```

<screenname> Specifies the screen name of the member to invite onto the stage.

=LIFO

Description

=LIFO lets an emcee set the ordering of his or her queue to last-in-first-out. When the ordering is last-in-first-out, the current item in the emcee queue is the most recently received item not yet broadcast or deleted by the emcee.

After an emcee sets the ordering, the message "Your holding queue is now Last-In-First-Out" appears. The main question and main comment queues are always first-in-first-out and cannot be changed.

Syntax

```
=LIFO
```

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=LISTUSERS

Description

=LISTUSERS lists the screen names of everyone in the audience and on the stage. The list appears to the emcee only.

In a well-attended auditorium event, the list can be longer than the screen, and appears too fast to read. To keep track of the members of the audience, open a log for the auditorium before sending the =LISTUSERS command.

Note: Emcees can also use the abbreviated command **=LU**.

Syntax

```
=LISTUSERS [-ONSTAGE]
```

-ONSTAGE	Lists only the people who are onstage (optional).

=LOUD

Description

=LOUD makes the conversations in a specific row visible to the whole audience. Emcees can make a row visible to the audience, for example, for a game that requires audience participation. Only one row can be loud at a time. Making a new row number loud turns off the current loud row.

For instructions, see "Making a Row Loud" on page 6-13.

Syntax

```
=LOUD <-row | -OFF>
```

<row>	Specifies the number of the row to make loud.
-OFF	Turns the loud setting off. The row's comments are no longer visible to the audience. Do not specify the row number with -OFF.

=MIKES

Description

=MIKES changes the status of a guest speaker's "microphone," or the guest's ability to address the audience. =MIKES applies only to guest speakers, or members that an emcee invites onto the stage. If the mike is on, the guest speaker can address the audience; if the mike is off, the guest speaker's write line is dimmed and the guest speaker cannot send any messages.

A guest speaker always enters the stage with his or her mike on. Emcees may want to turn the guest speaker's mike off until the guest speaker gets his or her bearings, to prevent an inadvertent comment from being seen by the whole audience.

Syntax

```
=MIKES [screenname] <-ON | -OFF>
```

[screenname]	Specifies the screen name that the =MIKES command affects. If no screen name is specified, the command affects all guest speakers on the stage.
-ON	Lets the guest(s) address the audience.
-OFF	Prevents the guest(s) from addressing the audience.

Example

```
=MIKES AKoontz -OFF
```

=MINE

Description

=MINE displays the next item in an emcee queue to the emcee only.

Syntax

```
=MINE
```

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=MSG

Description

=MSG broadcasts a text string to the stage and to the audience, with the prefix "Online Host." This lets emcees send anonymous messages to the audience.

See the =ASK command on page 6-16 for information about adding an emcee's question to the main question queue anonymously.

Syntax

```
=MSG <text>
```

<text>	Specifies the text to send to the stage and the audience anonymously. The text must be at least two characters long.

=NEXTC

Description

=NEXTC displays the next item in the main comment queue. The item becomes the current item in the emcee queue. If the emcee does not send it, broadcast it, or delete it, the item is stored in the emcee queue and can be retrieved later.

This command is also available as a master function on the Windows and Macintosh platforms.

Syntax

```
=NEXTC
```

=NEXTQ

Description

=NEXTQ displays the next item in the main question queue. The item becomes the current item in the emcee queue. If the emcee does not send it, broadcast it, or delete it, the item is stored in the emcee queue and can be retrieved later.

This command is also available as a master function on the Windows and Macintosh platforms.

Syntax

```
=NEXTQ
```

=POLLOFF

Description

=POLLOFF turns polling off. See the =POLLON command, below.

Syntax

```
=POLLOFF
```

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=POLLON

Description

=POLLON turns polling on. Polling lets members vote on an issue by typing a number corresponding to a choice and clicking on the Vote button on the Interact Window.

When an emcee turns polling on, he or she sets the number of choices members can vote for. The command can also broadcast a text file stored on the system, such as a legend that tells members which item each number corresponds to, and add a title to be stored with the poll results.

Syntax

```
=POLLON -<num> [-FILE <filename>] [-TITLE <title>]
```

<num>	Specifies the number of choices members can vote for. The default is 2.
-FILE <filename>	Broadcasts the file <filename> at the moment when polling begins (optional). This is used to display a legend that tells members what choice each number corresponds to. The file must be stored on the system by an America Online producer. For more information on storing a file on the system, see "Text for Broadcasting during an Event" on page 6-2.
-TITLE <title>	Attaches the text string <title> to the tabulation of the vote (optional). The title will appear whenever the poll results are broadcast with the =POLLSHOW command.

Example

```
=POLLON -5 -FILE vote.t -TITLE Results of Tonight's Voting
```

=POLLSHOW

Description

=POLLSHOW displays the results of a poll. Emcees can also save the results to a file on the system.

Syntax

```
=POLLSHOW [-FILE <filename>.t]
```

-FILE <filename>.t — Writes the results of the poll to a file on the system using the name <filename>.t (optional). If a previous version of <filename>.t exists, the new poll results overwrite it.

Note: You must add the **.t** extension if you plan to broadcast the results later using the =FILE command.

Example

```
=POLLSHOW -FILE results.t
```

=RESET

Description

=RESET lets an emcee sets the current, or opening bid, for a new auction. If the emcee does not specify an amount, the bid is reset to zero. If the emcee specifies an amount, that amount becomes the current bid, thus starting the bidding at a specific amount.

Syntax

```
=RESET [$<dollars>.<cents>]
```

<dollars> — Specifies the amount of dollars to reset the bid to. To specify no dollars, type a zero; for example, **$0.50**.

<cents> — Specifies the number of cents to reset the bid to. To specify no cents, type 00; for example, an opening bid of five dollars even is typed **$5.00**.

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=ROLL

Description

=ROLL runs a program that chooses numbers at random, simulating a roll of dice. The results of the roll are displayed by the system to all the members of the audience.

Syntax

```
=ROLL [-DICE <dice>] [-SIDES <sides>]
```

-DICE <dice> Specifies the number of dice to roll (optional). The default is 2. Once changed, the number of dice remains at the new setting until another =ROLL command changes it.

-SIDES <sides> Specifies the number of sides on each die (optional). The default is 6. (Many adventure games use dice with uncommon numbers of sides, such as 4, 8, 12, and 20.) Once changed, the number of sides remains at the new setting until another =ROLL command changes it.

Note: You cannot mix different-sided dice in a single roll. To roll two six-sided dice and two twenty-sided dice, for example, you must issue two separate commands. (Be sure to send a message to the audience telling them which roll is for which set of dice if you do this.)

=SEND

Description

=SEND lets an emcee send the current item in his or her queue to another emcee's own queue. In events run by more than one emcee, one emcee usually will review the questions, and then send the appropriate ones to the other emcee, who broadcasts them.

Syntax

```
=SEND <screenname>
```

<screenname> Specifies the screen name of the emcee to send to. If the screen name is not an emcee (that is, if the screen name did not enter via the master doorway), the command returns an error.

=SETMAX

Description

=SETMAX sets the maximum amount that a member can raise a bid. Once the maximum is set, the system does not accept bids that increase the current bid by more than the maximum raise. The member receives an error message.

Syntax

```
=SETMAX $<dollars>.<cents>
```

<dollars> Specifies the maximum amount of dollars that a member can increase a bid. The default is 10. To specify no dollars, type a zero; for example, **$0.50**.

<cents> Specifies the maximum number of cents that a member can increase the bid. To specify no cents, type 00; for example, an maximum increase of five dollars even is typed **$5.00**.

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=SETMIN

Description

=SETMIN sets the minimum amount that a member can raise a bid. Once the minimum is set, the system does not accept bids that increase the current bid by less than the minimum raise. The member receives an error message.

Syntax

```
=SETMIN $<dollars>.<cents>
```

<dollars> Specifies the minimum amount of dollars that a member can increase a bid. The default is 1. To specify no dollars, type a zero; for example, **$0.50**.

<cents> Specifies the minimum number of cents that a member can increase the bid. To specify no cents, type 00; for example, an minimum increase of five dollars even is typed **$5.00**.

=SHOW

Description

=SHOW displays the current bid, minimum increase, and maximum increase to the entire auditorium, as shown in Figure 6.6:

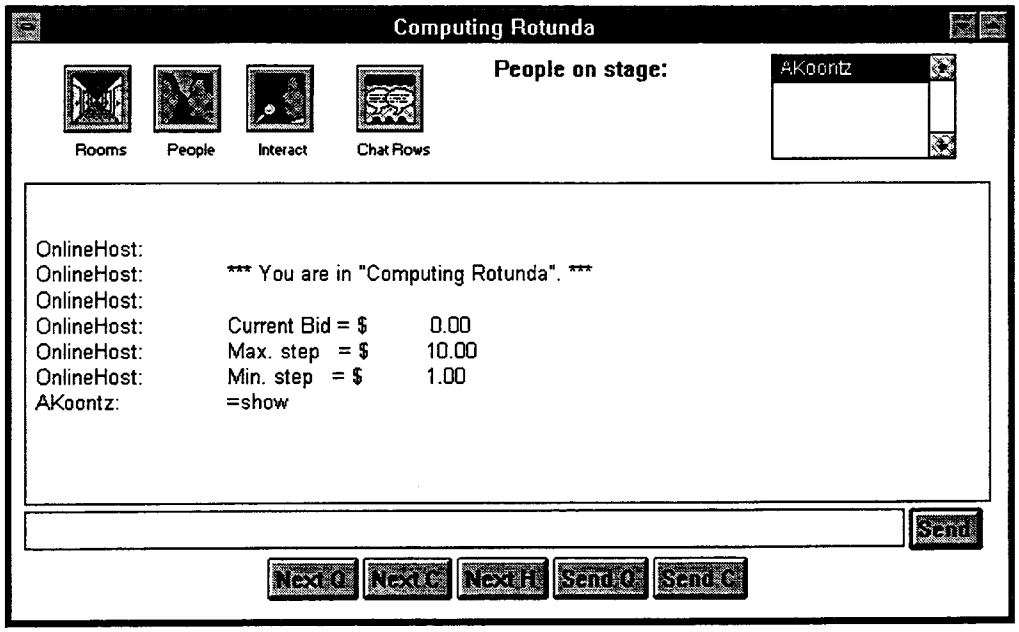

Figure 6.6 – Showing Bidding Information

Syntax

```
=SHOW
```

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=STAT

Description

=STAT displays the number of guests and the number of items in the main question queue, the main comment queue, and the emcee's personal queue. (An emcee cannot display another emcee's own queue.) Figure 6.7 shows an example of displaying audience statistics:

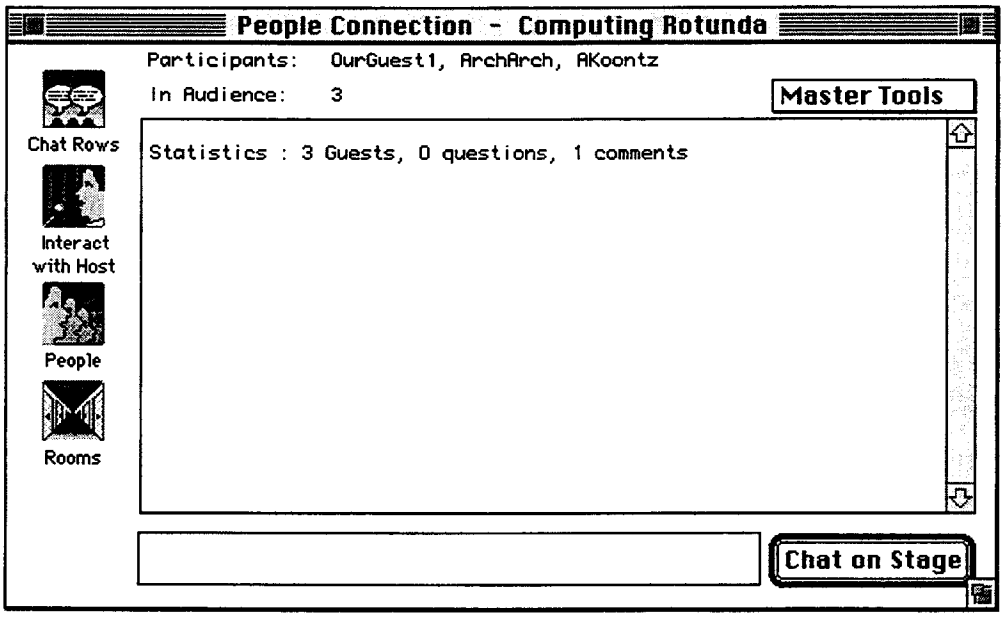

Figure 6.7 – Displaying Audience Statistics

Note: The emcee's current item is not displayed in any of the queue counts.

Syntax

```
=STAT
```

CHAPTER 7

Creating Sign-On Promotions (Affinity Groups Only)

What is a Sign-On Promotion?

Sign-on promotions are short announcements with icons that appear on the Welcome Screen, the first screen members see when they sign on to America Online.

Sign-on promotions can only be created by affinity group information providers. Affinity groups are groupings of members who all joined America Online using a customized version of the America Online software prepared especially for the affinity group.

If you are not an affinity group, you do not need to read this chapter. Contact your America Online producer to learn how to request a sign-on promotion for your area.

There are four different sign-on promotions displayed on the Welcome Screen. Sign-ons can differ from platform to platform. When you create a sign-on promotion, you choose an icon that represents the area you want members to go to for that promotion. When a member clicks on that icon, the promotion runs the America Online keyword for the service or area you are promoting, taking the member to the area.

Figure 7.1 shows a sample Welcome Screen with its sign-on promotions:

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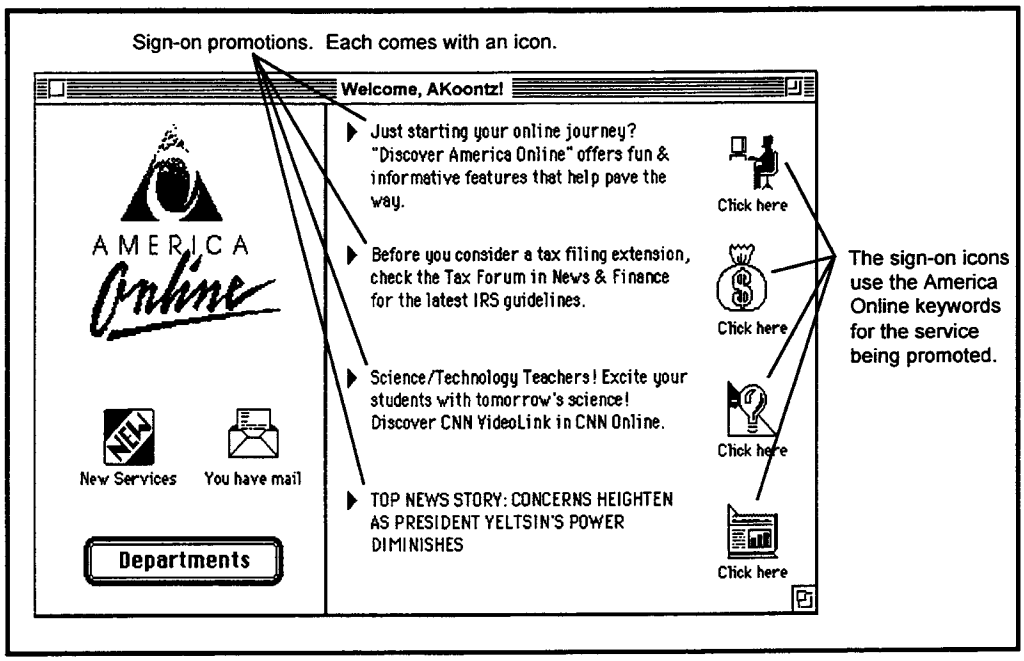
Sign-on promotions. Each comes with an icon.
Welcome, AKoontz!
Just starting your online journey? "Discover America Online" offers fun & informative features that help pave the way.
Before you consider a tax filing extension, check the Tax Forum in News & Finance for the latest IRS guidelines.
Science/Technology Teachers! Excite your students with tomorrow's science! Discover CNN VideoLink in CNN Online.
TOP NEWS STORY: CONCERNS HEIGHTEN AS PRESIDENT YELTSIN'S POWER DIMINISHES
Click here
Click here
Click here
Click here
The sign-on icons use the America Online keywords for the service being promoted.
AMERICA Online
New Services
You have mail
Departments

Figure 7.1 – Welcome Screen with Sign-On Promotions

How Affinity Group Sign-Ons Work

Members of affinity groups do not receive the third sign-on promotion that America Online normally sends to the Welcome Screen. The first and second sign-ons on the Welcome Screen move down one position each, and the information provider creates the sign-on promotion for the resulting blank where the first sign-on was. Figure 7.2 shows the difference between a normal Welcome screen and an affinity group's Welcome Screen:

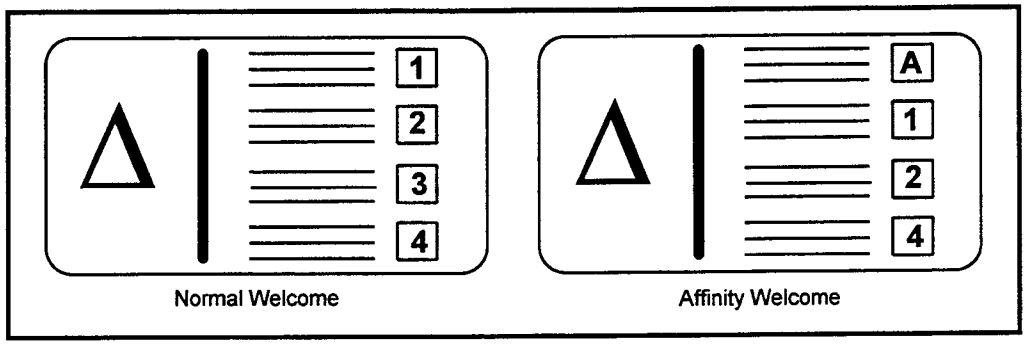

Figure 7.2 – Normal Welcome Screen vs. Affinity Welcome Screen

If you are an affinity group information provider, America Online has assigned you a special code called a Promo ID number. Each affinity group has at least one Promo ID of its own.

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America Online has also given you access to the **Promotions Management Tool**, an online tool that requires either the Macintosh client or the PC Geos client. You cannot create promotions from the Windows platform. Access to the tool is by screen name, not by account. Even if one screen name on your account has access to the **Promotions Management Tool**, the other screen names do not automatically have access.

With the **Promotions Management Tool**, you can create, modify, and delete sign-ons for the Welcome Screens of your affinity groups, instead of asking America Online to do it. Information providers can only create and change the sign-ons for their own Promo IDs. They cannot change other affinity groups' sign-ons, or the three remaining sign-ons under the control of America Online. If an information provider attempts to use another Promo ID, the attempt fails.

Note: Information providers can only access the **Promotions Management Tool** during America Online business hours (9:00 AM to 6:00 PM EST).

How Long Can a Sign-On Promotion Be?

A sign-on promotion must be less than 125 characters long.

Each promotion is restricted to four lines on the Welcome Screen. The 125-character maximum may still be too long in certain circumstances. The America Online Welcome Screens use proportional fonts, or typefaces where the letters are different widths. If your promotional text has many capital letters or wide letters such as "m," the number of characters you can have is reduced.

If your sign-on promotion exceeds four lines, the remainder does not appear on the Windows or Macintosh Welcome Screens. The PC Geos Welcome Screen will add a scrollbar to accommodate the extra text, but this looks unattractive. If the promotion is too long, change it immediately.

Creating a New Promotion

You must be an affinity group information provider, and you must be signed on to America Online using the Macintosh or the PC Geos software to use the **Promotions Management Tool**.

To create a new sign-on promotion, perform the following steps:

1. Press ⌘-K (Macintosh) or CTRL-K (PC Geos).

   - or -

   Select Keyword from the Go To menu.

   The Go to Keyword Screen appears:

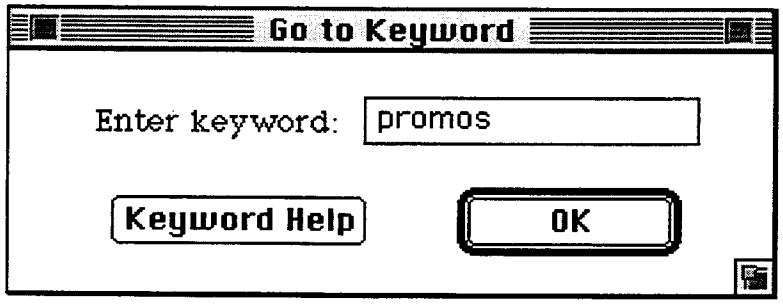

Figure 7.3 – Go to Keyword Screen

2. Type

   promos

3. Press RETURN.

   The Promotions Management menu appears, with the function List Promotions highlighted:

Figure 7.4 – Promotions Management Menu

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4. Double-click on the function Create Promotion.

   The Create Promotion Screen appears:

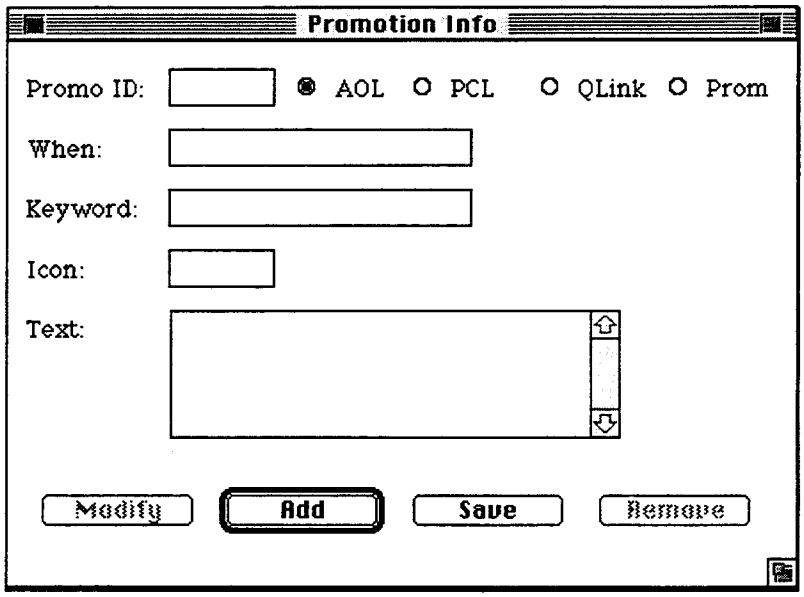

Figure 7.5 – Create Promotion Screen

Promo ID 5. Type the Promo ID number of the sign-on promotion you want to create.

AOL Not supported.

PCL Not supported.

QLink Not supported.

Prom Not supported.

When 6. Type

now

to display this sign-on promotion immediately. If any members of your affinity group are currently online, their Welcome Screens do not change. Members of your affinity group who sign on after you change the promotion see the new sign-on on their Welcome Screens.

- or -

Type the date and time when you want this promotion to appear, in the format:

[YY-]MM-DD HH:MM [ZZZ]

where

YY	is the year. Use this only to schedule promotions for a different calendar year than the current year (e.g., scheduling a January promotion in December). If the year for the promotion is earlier than the current system date or time, the tool does not accept the promotion.
MM	is the month. If you are creating a promotion for today, you do not need to type the month or the day. For all dates other than today, you must type both month and day.
DD	is the day. If you are creating a promotion for today, you do not need to type the month or the day. For all dates other than today, you must type both month and day. If the date for the promotion is earlier than the current system date or time, or does not exist (e.g., February 31), the tool does not accept the promotion.
HH:MM	is the time in military format (00 to 23 hours, 00 to 59 minutes). If another promotion is scheduled to begin within 5 minutes of this promotion, the tool does not accept the promotion.
ZZZ	is the seasonal time zone. The only allowed entries are EST (Eastern Standard Time) or EDT (Eastern Daylight Time). Use this only to

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schedule a promotion for a date when you know the time will change (e.g., scheduling a November promotion in early October). If the time changes and there is no seasonal time zone code, the system will change the time of the promotion. For example, if on October 15 you schedule a promotion for November 1st at 18:00 without a seasonal time zone code, the promotion runs on November 1st at 17:00.

Keyword

7. Type the keyword that you want to run when the member clicks on the icon for this promotion. Type it exactly as you would type it at the keyword prompt online.

Icon

8. Type the number of the icon you want to appear with this promotion. You can use either an icon file or a PICT file. If you want to use a PICT file, you must type a minus sign (-) before the number.

   Affinity groups almost always have their own special artwork, such as official logos or trademarks, stored on America Online when the affinity group is created. If you do not know the numbers of your affinity group's authorized artwork, contact your America Online producer.

Text

9. Type the text you want to appear in this promotion.

   For a discussion of recommended length of promotional text, see the section "How Long Can a Sign-On Promotion Be?" on page 7-3.

   Figure 7.6 shows the Create Promotion Screen with a completed sample sign-on promotion:

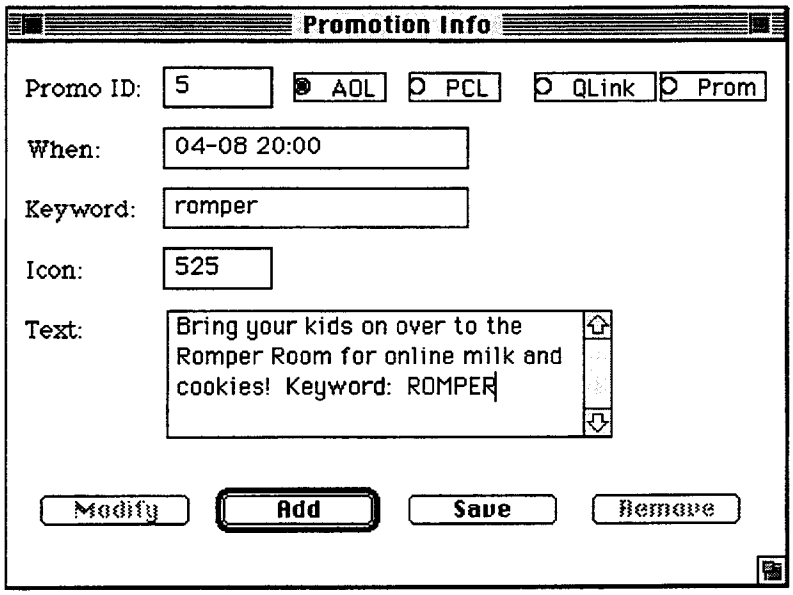

Figure 7.6 – Sample Create Promotion Screen

Add

10. Click on the Add button to save your entries and schedule this promotion.

    A blank Create Promotion Screen appears.

    Your promotion runs from the time you specified in the When field until you replace it with a new promotion.

Save

Not supported.

11. Click on the close box in the upper left corner to close the Create Promotion Screen.

    The Promotions Management Menu reappears.

Viewing Currently Scheduled Promotions

You may want to view the promotions you have currently scheduled, in case you need to change or remove them.

To view the currently scheduled promotions, perform the following steps:

1. Press ⌘-K (Macintosh) or CTRL-K (PC Geos).

   - or -

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Select Keyword from the Go To menu.

The Go to Keyword Screen appears:

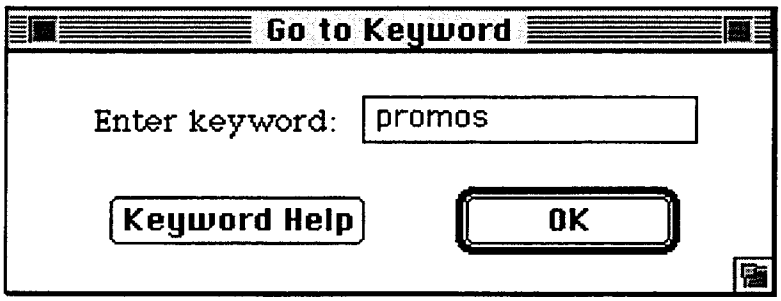

Figure 7.7 – Go to Keyword Screen

2. Type

   promos

3. Press RETURN.

   The Promotions Management menu appears, with the function List Promotions highlighted:

Figure 7.8 – Promotions Management Menu

4. Click on the function List Promotions.

   The Promotion Criteria Selection Screen appears:

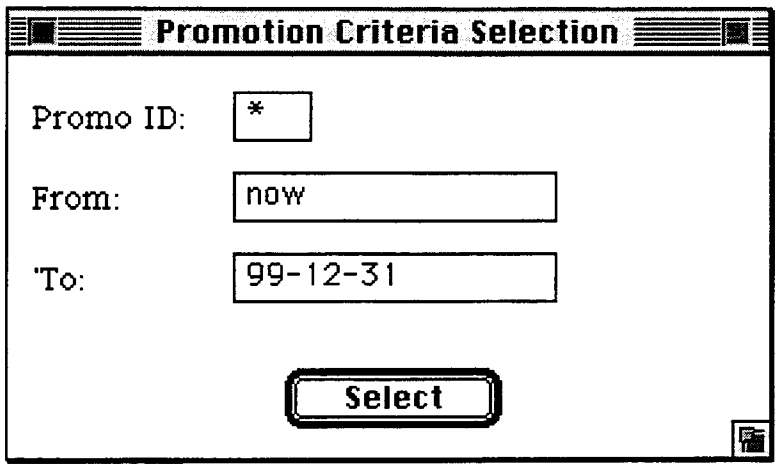

Figure 7.9 – Promotion Criteria Selection Screen

Promo ID 5. Type the Promo ID of the sign-on promotion schedule you want to see.

From 6. Type

now

to view all sign-on promotions scheduled after the current system date and time.

- or -

Type the date and time for the earliest promotion you want to view, in the format

[YY-]MM-DD HH:MM

where

YY	is the year. Use this only to view promotions for a different calendar year than the current year.
MM	is the month.
DD	is the day.
HH:MM	is the time in military format (00 to 23 hours, 00 to 59 minutes). If you do not include the time, the list

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begins at 00:00 of the month/day you type.

The date/time must be later than the current system date/time; the system does not maintain old sign-on promotions.

To 7. Type the date and time for the latest promotion you want to view, in the format

[YY-]MM-DD HH:MM

where

YY	is the year. Use this only to view promotions for a different calendar year than the current year.
MM	is the month.
DD	is the day.
HH:MM	is the time in military format (00 to 23 hours, 00 to 59 minutes). If you do not include the time, the list ends at 23:59 (11:59 p.m.) of the month/day you type.

The date/time must be later than the current system date/time and the date/time you typed in the From field. The default is 99-12-31.

Select 8. Press Select to view your list. The Promotion List Screen appears:

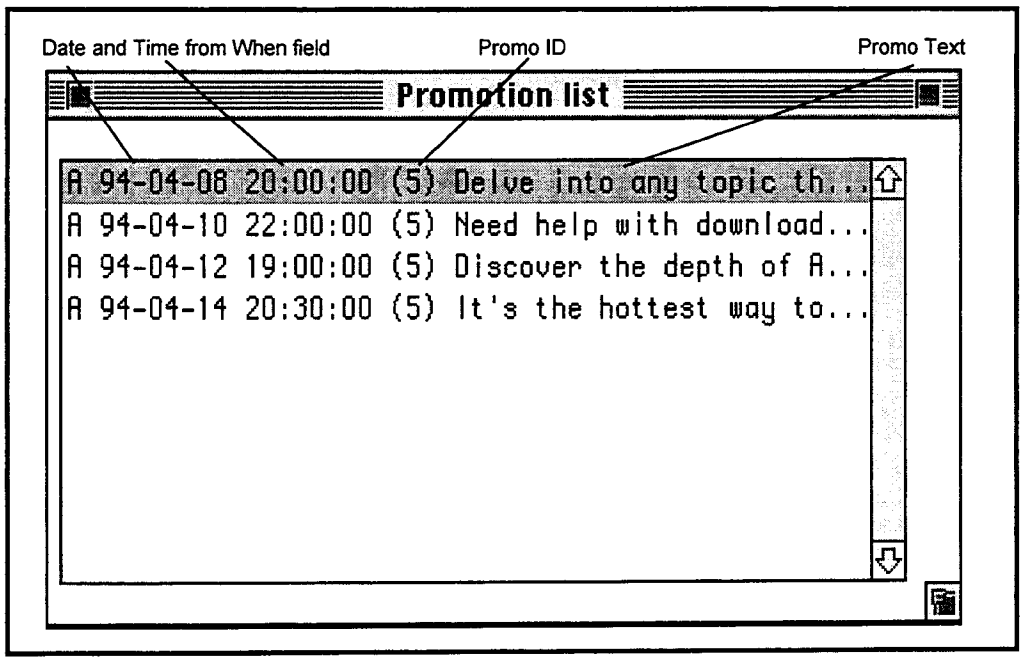
Date and Time from When field
Promo ID
Promo Text
Promotion list
A 94-04-08 20:00:00 (5) Delve into any topic th...
A 94-04-10 22:00:00 (5) Need help with download...
A 94-04-12 19:00:00 (5) Discover the depth of A...
A 94-04-14 20:30:00 (5) It's the hottest way to...

Figure 7.10 – Annotated Promotion List Screen

9. Scroll through the list to read the promotions.

10. Click on the close box in the upper left corner of the screen to exit this screen.

    The Promotions Management Menu reappears.

Modifying an Upcoming Promotion

You may need to change the text of an upcoming promotion that you have already scheduled. You do this, for example, if the event you are promoting changes to a different time or date.

You cannot modify the date and time that the promotion is displayed, the icon, or the keyword of a scheduled sign-on promotion. To change any of those fields, you must delete the existing promotion and add a new one with the new information you want in the promotion. For more information, see "Deleting a Promotion" on page 7-18.

If you need to change the current promotion – for example, because there was an error in the text – you must add it again as a new promotion. See "Creating a New Promotion" on page 7-3.

To modify an upcoming promotion, perform the following steps:

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1. Press ⌘-K (Macintosh) or CTRL-K (PC Geos).

   - or -

   Select Keyword from the Go To menu.

   The Go to Keyword Screen appears:

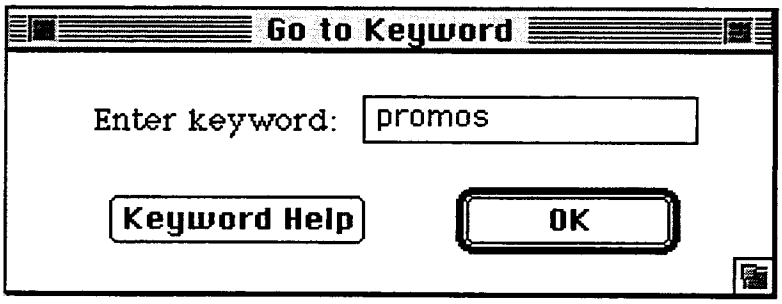

Figure 7.11 – Go to Keyword Screen

2. Type

   promos

3. Press RETURN.

   The Promotions Management menu appears, with the function List Promotions highlighted:

Figure 7.12 – Promotions Management Menu

4. Click on the function List Promotions.

   The Promotion Criteria Selection Screen appears:

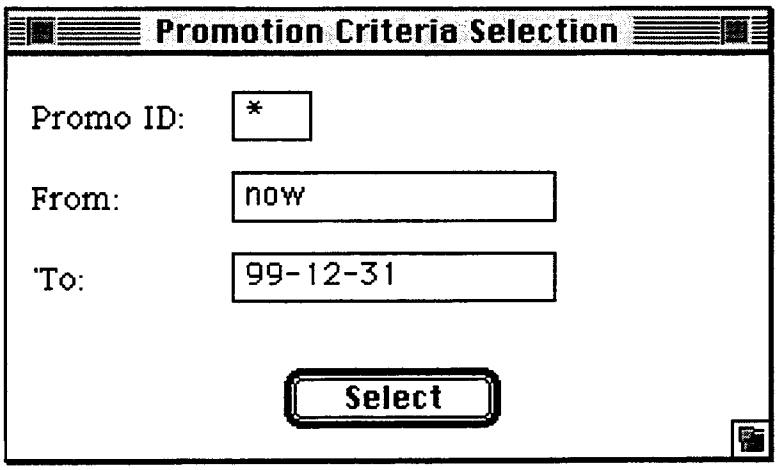

Figure 7.13 – Promotion Criteria Selection Screen

Promo ID

5. Leave the asterisk default to view all promotions currently scheduled.

   - or -

   Type a Promo ID to view all promotions scheduled for that ID.

   You can only view promotions for your own affinity group's Promo IDs.

From

6. Type

   now

   to view all sign-on promotions scheduled after the current system date and time.

   - or -

   Type the date and time for the earliest promotion you want to view, in the format

   [YY-]MM-DD HH:MM

   where

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	YY	is the year. Use this only to view promotions for a different calendar year than the current year.
	MM	is the month.
	DD	is the day.
	HH:MM	is the time in military format (00 to 23 hours, 00 to 59 minutes). If you do not include the time, the list begins at 00:00 of the month/day you type.

The date/time must be later than the current system date/time; the system does not maintain old promos.

To 7. Type the date and time for the latest promotion you want to view, in the format

[YY-]MM-DD HH:MM

where

	YY	is the year. Use this only to view promotions for a different calendar year than the current year.
	MM	is the month.
	DD	is the day.
	HH:MM	is the time in military format (00 to 23 hours, 00 to 59 minutes). If you do not include the time, the list ends at 23:59 (11:59 p.m.) of the month/day you type.

The date/time must be later than the current system date/time and the date/time you typed in the From field. The default is 99-12-31.

Select 8. Press Select to view your list. The Promotion List Screen appears:

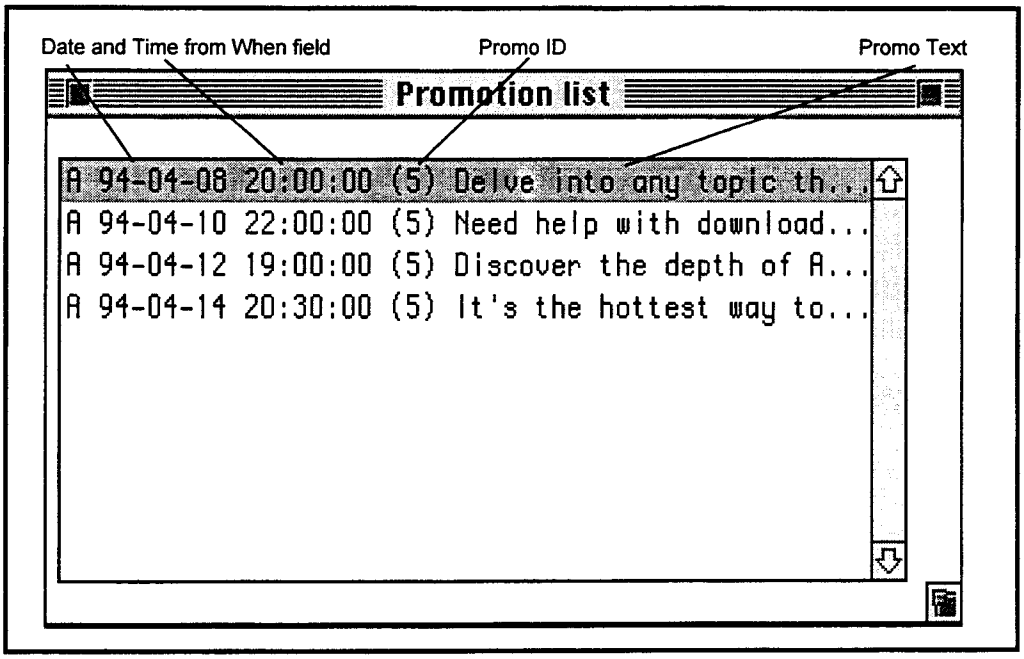
Date and Time from When field
Promo ID
Promo Text
Promotion list
A 94-04-08 20:00:00 (5) Delve into any topic th...
A 94-04-10 22:00:00 (5) Need help with download...
A 94-04-12 19:00:00 (5) Discover the depth of A...
A 94-04-14 20:30:00 (5) It's the hottest way to...

Figure 7.14 – Annotated Promotion List Screen

9. Scroll through the list to find the promotion you want to modify.

10. Click on the promotion you want to modify.

    The Promotion Info Screen appears:

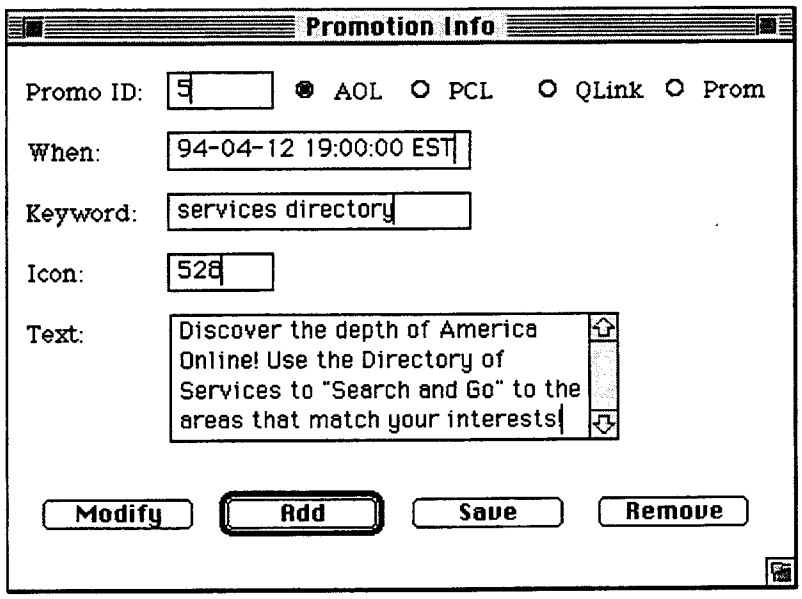

Figure 7.15 – Sample Promotion Info Screen

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Promo ID You cannot change the ID of an existing promotion.

AOL Not supported.

PCL Not supported.

QLink Not supported.

Prom Not supported.

When You cannot change the date and time of an existing promotion. To reschedule a promotion, you must delete it, then re-create it.

Keyword You cannot change the keyword of an existing promotion.

Icon You cannot change the icon of an existing promotion.

Text

11. Type the text to appear in this promotion.

    For a discussion of recommended length of promotional text, see "How Long Can a Sign-On Promotion Be?" on page 7-3.

Modify

12. Click on the Modify button to save your changes and schedule this promotion.

    Your promotion runs from the time you set in the When field until another promotion for the same ID replaces it.

    When you modify a promotion, a confirmation message appears. See Figure 7.16.

Add Do not click on the Add button. The system interprets this as an attempt to add a conflicting promotion.

Save Do not click on the Save button. It is not supported.

Remove Do not click on the Remove button. See "Deleting a Promotion" on page 7-18.

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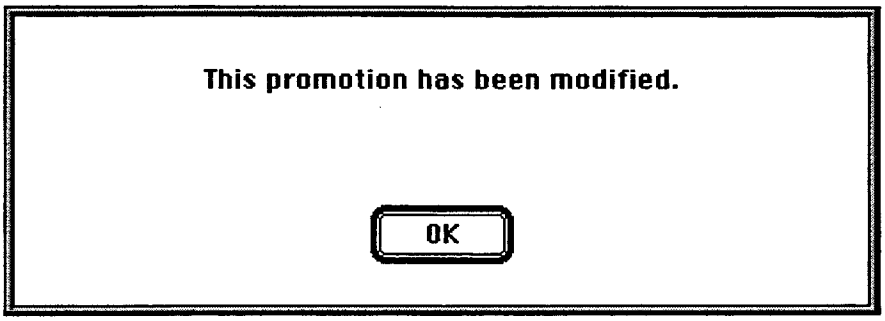

Figure 7.16 – Modify Confirmation Message

OK

13. Click on OK to clear the prompt.

    The List Promotions Screen reappears.

14. Click on the close box in the upper left corner of the List Promotions Screen to return to the Promotions Management Menu.

Deleting a Promotion

You can delete a currently scheduled promotion. You do this, for example, when the event the promotion announces has been canceled.

To delete a promotion, perform the following steps:

1. Press ⌘-K (Macintosh) or CTRL-K (PC Geos).

   - or -

   Select Keyword from the Go To menu.

   The Go to Keyword Screen appears:

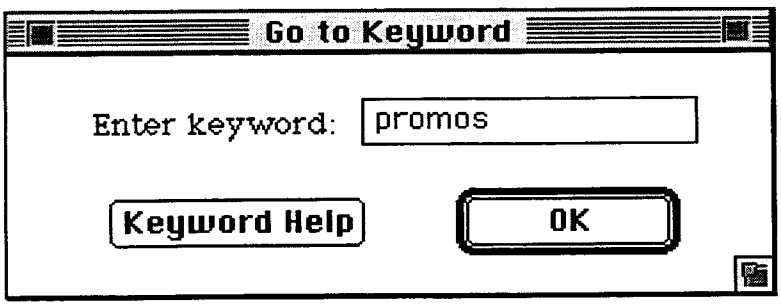

Figure 7.17 – Go to Keyword Screen

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2. Type

   promos

3. Press RETURN.

   The Promotions Management menu appears, with the function List Promotions highlighted:

Figure 7.18 – Promotions Management Menu

4. Click on the function List Promotions.

   The Promotion Criteria Selection Screen appears:

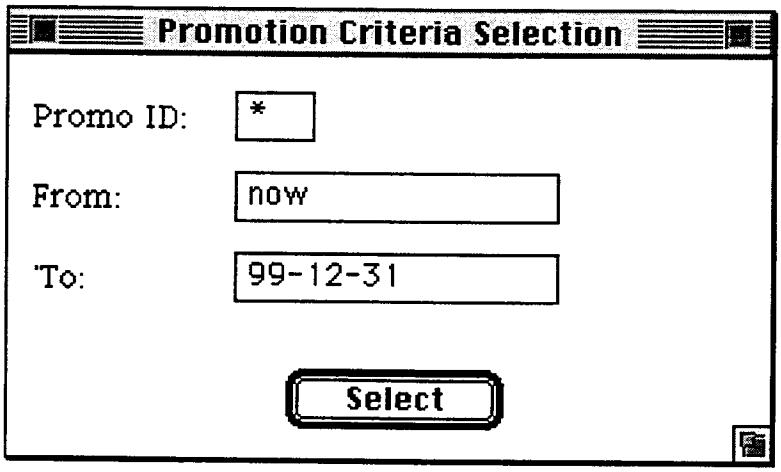

Figure 7.19 – Promotion Criteria Selection Screen

Promo ID

5. Leave the asterisk default to view all promotions currently scheduled.

- or -

Type a Promo ID to view all promotions scheduled for that ID.

You can only view promotions for your own affinity group's Promo IDs.

From

6. Type

now

to view all promotions scheduled after the current system date and time.

- or -

Type the date and time for the earliest promotion you want to view, in the format

[YY-]MM-DD HH:MM

where

YY	is the year. Use this only to view promotions for a different calendar year than the current year.
MM	is the month.
DD	is the day.
HH:MM	is the time in military format (00 to 23 hours, 00 to 59 minutes). If you do not include the time, the list begins at 00:00 of the month/day you type.

The date/time must be later than the current system date/time; the system does not maintain old promos.

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To

7. Type the date and time for the latest promotion you want to view, in the format

   [YY-]MM-DD HH:MM

   where

YY	is the year. Use this only to view promotions for a different calendar year than the current year.
MM	is the month.
DD	is the day.
HH:MM	is the time in military format (00 to 23 hours, 00 to 59 minutes). If you do not include the time, the list ends at 23:59 (11:59 p.m.) of the month/day you type.

   The date/time must be later than the current system date/time and the date/time you typed in the From field. The default is 99-12-31.

Select

8. Press Select to view your list. The Promotion List Screen appears:

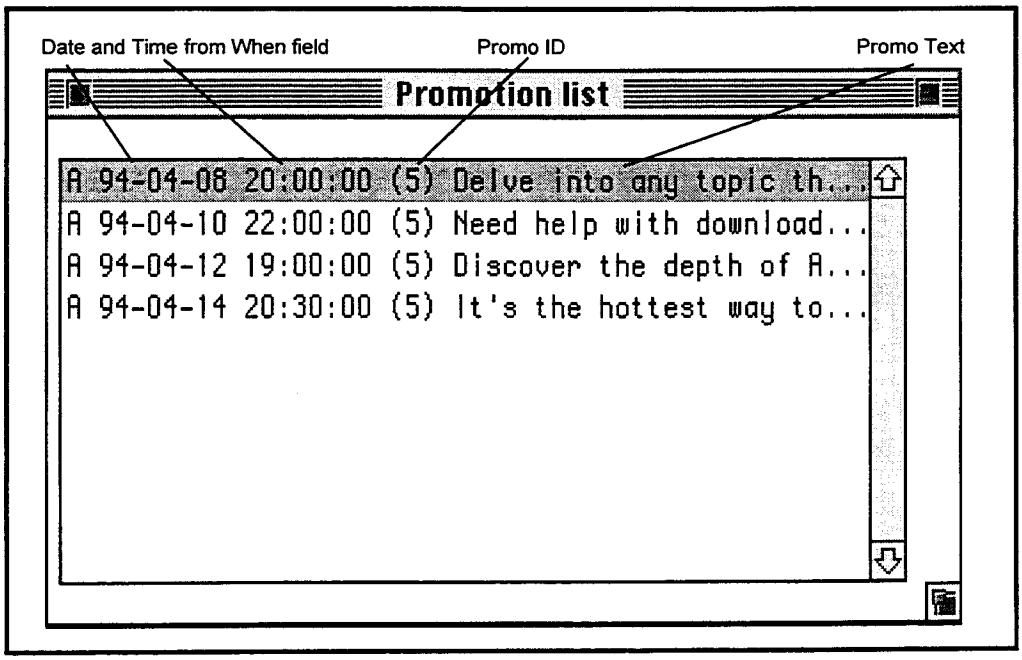
Date and Time from When field
Promo ID
Promo Text
Promotion list
A 94-04-08 20:00:00 (5) Delve into any topic th...
A 94-04-10 22:00:00 (5) Need help with download...
A 94-04-12 19:00:00 (5) Discover the depth of A...
A 94-04-14 20:30:00 (5) It's the hottest way to...

Figure 7.20 – Annotated Promotion List Screen

9. Scroll through the list to find the promotion you want to delete.

10. Click on the promotion you want to delete.

    The Promotion Info Screen appears:

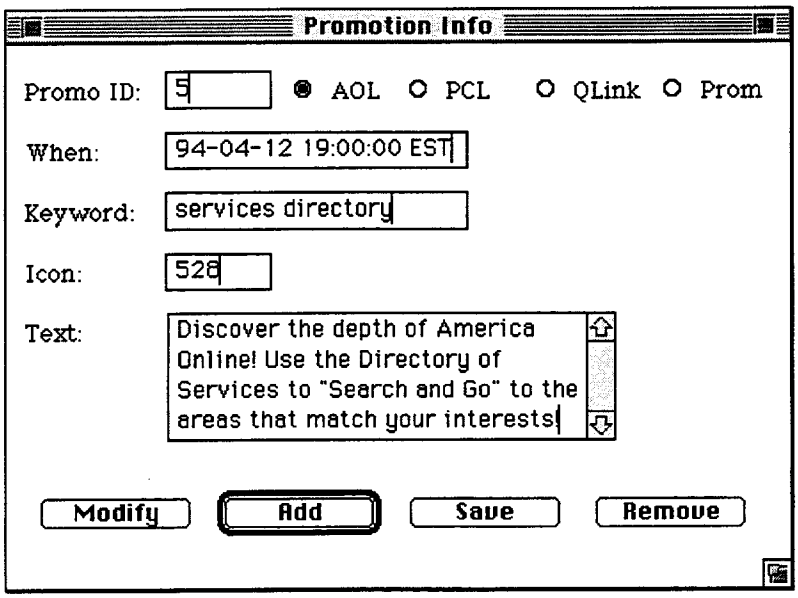

Figure 7.21 – Sample Promotion Info Screen

Remove 11. Click on Remove to delete this promotion.

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Add Do not click on the Add button. The system interprets this as an attempt to add a conflicting promotion.

Modify Do not click on the Modify button. This will reactivate your promotion.

Save Do not click on the Save button. It is not supported.

When you click on Remove, a message appears confirming that your promotion has been deleted:

Figure 7.22 – Delete Confirmation Message

OK

12. Click on OK to clear the message.

    The Promotion Info Screen reappears. The information for the promotion you deleted remains on the screen. If you have deleted the promotion in error, you can click on the Add button to restore it.

13. Click on the close box in the upper left corner of the Promotion Info Screen to return to the List Promotions Screen.

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